MIGHTY REAL! Before RuPaul, The Legendary Sylvester

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Rockmond Dunbar

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Vol 8 No 1 March 2002

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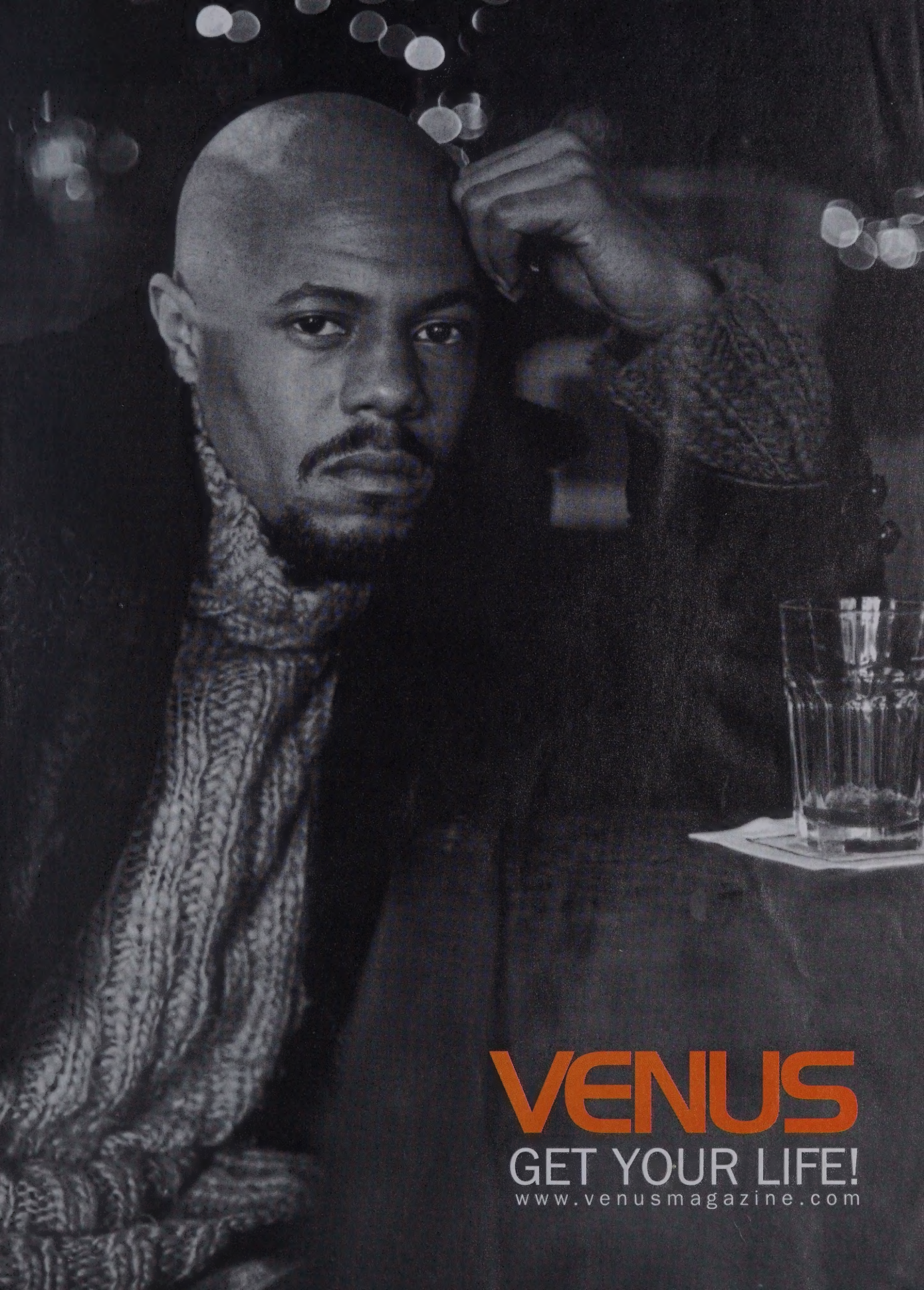
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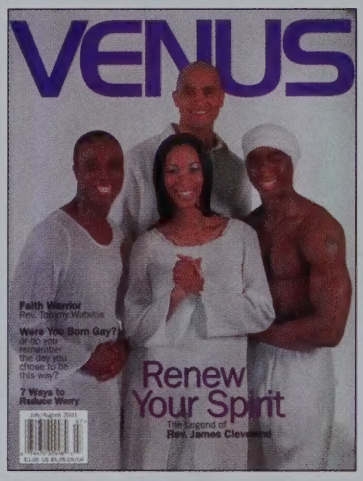


"Rev. Rodney Powell is setting himself up for failure by allowing himself to be used as a puppet by a white gay organization. The white gay rights movement will never compare to the Civil Rights Movement and the 400 years of servitude."

Lessons Learned

It was breathtaking and refreshing to read my very first copy of *Venus* magazine, [Vol. 7 No. 4, 2001.] Finally, black gays and lesbians have a national voice, and I enjoyed the eclectic range of articles concerning black gay life and the larger society.

I must respond to Mrs. Gwen Watkins, mother of the now deposed and defrocked Rev. Tommie Watkins, Jr. Mrs. Watkins should rid herself of such bondage and hegemony. God is Love; he alone can judge, and he doesn't make junk - Man does! I inferred from the article that Mrs. Watkins only loves her son on condition that he keep his sexuality a secret from members of First Missionary Baptist Church.

In no place in her letter did she state that she gives him her blessings for his mental, emotional, physical and spiritual contentment. It is the phony, wannabee saints, such as Mrs. Watkins, who perpetuate the black homophobia and intraracial discrimination in the black church. If on next Sunday at any church in any city all black gays, lesbians and bisexuals decided not to attend services, the majority of the pews would be empty.

Secondly, in "SoulForce: Seeking Justice for All God's Children," the Rev. Rodney Powell is setting himself up for failure by allowing himself to be used as a puppet by a white gay organization. The white gay rights movement will never compare to the Civil Rights Movement or the 400 years of servitude that blacks have endured in this country.

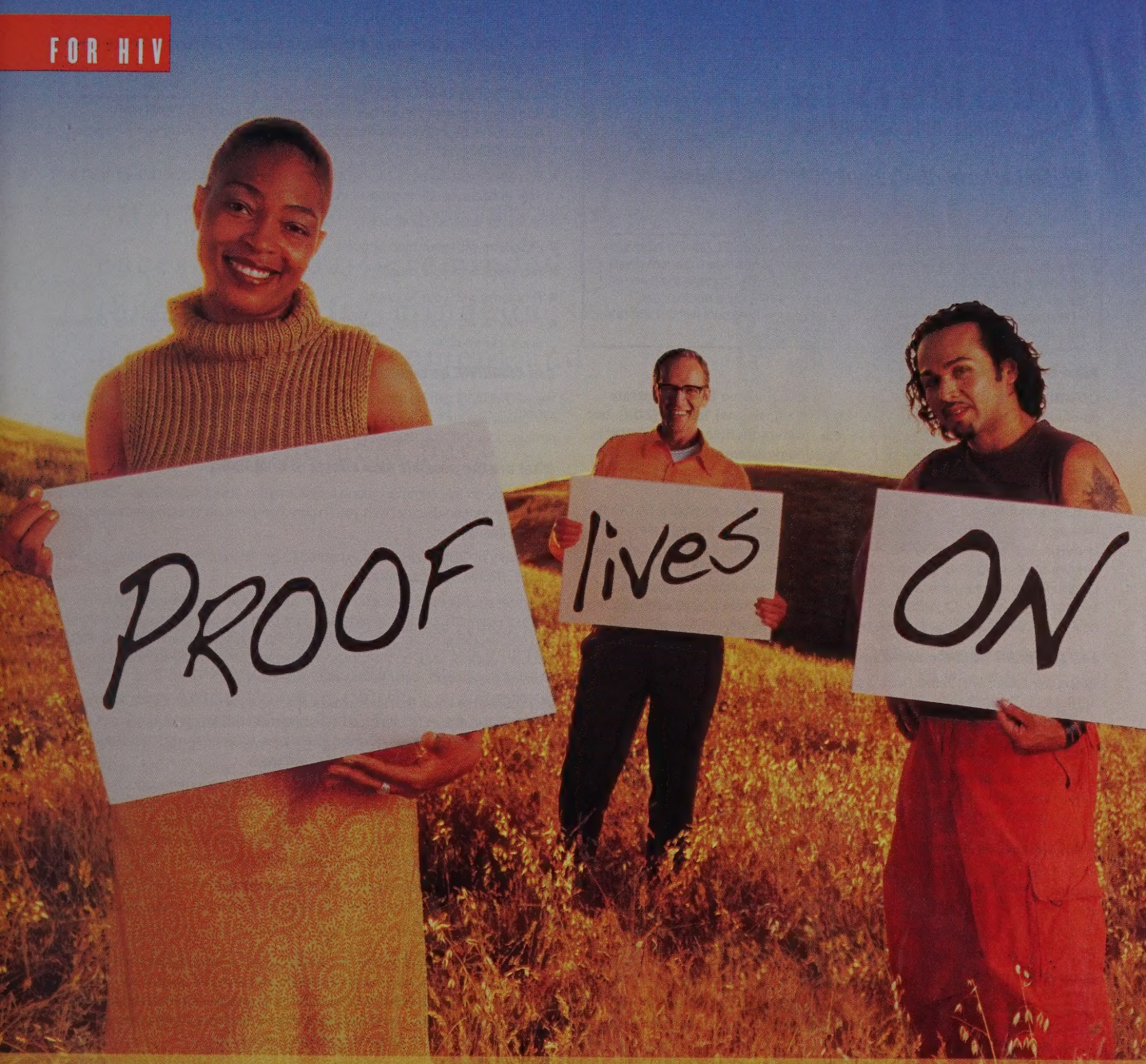
[Whites] have always had freedom when basic human rights were denied to the African Americans. I have never read anywhere, historically, where white gays were lynched, denied voting rights, denied access to public facilities, etc. White gays have always sat at the front of the bus, followed by white women, as people of color stood at the very back of the bus or we stood on a curb and watched from the outside.

The lessons learned from the Civil Rights Movement are inconsequential to a group that has always been and still is a member of the large white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) community. This group did not support the Civil Rights Movement in its heyday; they stood by quietly and watched, and sometimes supported, the denial of human rights to people of color in America. Rev. Powell can be of better use to the black gay and lesbian national unity.

Finally, amen to Rev. Irene Monroe's "Facing Our Moral and Spiritual Challenge." I agree that the infighting within the LGBT communities of color must stop; however, it will be a very virulent and uphill battle for unity. Many in the gay and lesbian community do not love themselves. They have been taught to feel this way by the media, parents, friends, co-workers, etc. This indescribable and wicked mental sickness crosses all economic and cultural backgrounds of gays of color. It will take several decades of group therapy to rid the black gay and straight community of such self-depreciating nonsense.

Sir Duke Hill
Killeen-Fort Hood, Texas

FOR HIV



SAFETY INFORMATION

- COMBIVIR does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others
- COMBIVIR should be used with other HIV medicines
- Make sure to see your doctor regularly because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells
- A buildup of lactic acid in the blood and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen
- Low risk of problems with the pancreas in adults and adolescents
- The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose

Please see Important Information for COMBIVIR on adjacent page.

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ONE TABLET TWICE A DAY

Patient Information about COMBIVIR Tablets

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
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Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR. Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your doctor. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC®] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) Tablets [ZDV], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (la-MIV-u-deen) and zidovudine (Zi-DOHV-u-deen), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and either two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine (also known as EPIVIR or 3TC) or zidovudine (also known as RETROVIR or ZDV).

Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR, or TRIZIVIR® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine.

Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

If you are 65 years of age or over, consult your healthcare professional about the functioning of your liver, kidneys, and heart; about other illnesses you may suffer from, and about any other medications you may be taking. It is possible that the dosage may need to be modified.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: 1-800-258-4263.
- You are breast-feeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breast-feed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.

Also talk to your doctor about:

- Problems with your blood counts.
- Problems with your muscles.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes. COMBIVIR can be taken with most other medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects occurring in 5% or more of patients included: muscle and joint pain, headache, nausea, weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion.

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted; your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience. Although it may make you healthier, COMBIVIR does not cure HIV.

Safety Information

Make sure to see your doctor regularly, because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells. A buildup of acid in the blood, and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen. The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose.

Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.

gsk GlaxoSmithKline
GlaxoSmithKline
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

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CBV501R0 December 2001

"Her presence at several conferences . . . clearly reminded me that community-mindedness has no age requirement and that each of us has as much ability as the next person."

Oh Drama! Sanford Gaylord gets Personal
VENUS
YOUR NEW GUIDE to the CULTURE, CUISINE & COLLECTIBLES WE LOVE!
DEVOTION 4
GAY WOMEN SHARE THEIR PASSIONS & THEIR PETS
HEROES IN THE STRUGGLE
THE EXHIBIT AND TOUR!

Why Not?

I was sad to learn of Ruth Joyce Waters' passing last summer [Vol. 7 No. 5, 2001, "Legendary"]. I remember her as a founder of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum (NBLGLF), a pioneering organization she held near and dear to her heart that greatly inspired me after attending my first conference in Oakland, February 1992.

I recall her presence at several conferences since: clearly the "Mother" of the organization and a reminder that community-mindedness has no age requirement and that each of us has as much ability as the next person to create change in our own communities.

My last memory of Waters was in the late '90s when I was interviewing for the position of executive director for the NBLGLF. Although one of three finalists, I was not selected. Afterward, as we often did during the conference, I was in the lobby with friends conversing, philosophizing and, in my case, being disappointed at not being selected for the position of E.D.

Waters joined us in the lobby. She was jovial and positive and someone pulled out a camera and wanted to take pictures. I didn't want to be photographed (a rarity for me!) because I was sad. When I declined to be photographed, she asked, "Why not?" I, of course, had no good reason and proceeded to be photographed. I'm glad she asked "Why not?" and I'm glad I had the honor of knowing and admiring Ruth Joyce Waters. It's time for me to look through my old photographs.

Crystal H. Weston
Oakland, CA

Great Warrior

Just wanted to let Leroy Whitfield know that I really enjoyed the article titled "Oh Drama!" [Vol. 7 No. 6]. The write-up about Sanford Gaylord was wonderfully done. Gaylord is a great warrior in the black gay community. I hope to see more of him in upcoming issues. The magazine staff is doing a great job!

Anthony Hardaway
Brothers United of Memphis, TN

Beautiful Portrait

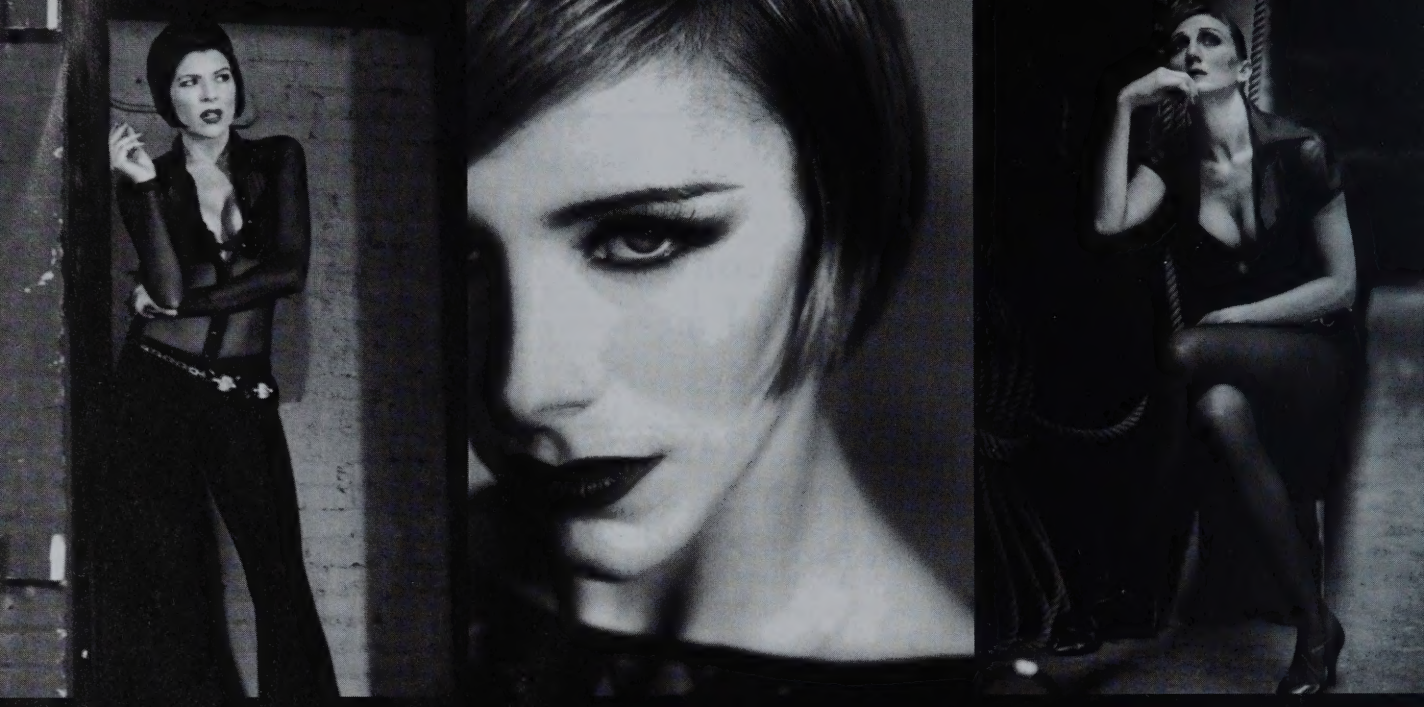
Thank you so much for putting together such a great magazine. Finally, a publication that speaks to me and confronts the issues that matter to me and tells my story. I think it is very important for any group of people to look into the mirror of society and see themselves reflected, along with everyone else. Thanks, *Venus*, for showing such a beautiful portrait of me.

James Lane
Newark, NJ

Keep it coming!

write us and share your thoughts

Send letters with your name, address, and daytime phone number to: Letters, c/o Venus Magazine, P. O. Box 150, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706, or e-mail us at letters@venusmagazine.com. Letters chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity. All letters submitted become the property of Venus Magazine and may be used in any media.



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features

48 **THE ROCK**
Bold, multi-talented, a sex symbol in both the gay and straight communities, Rockmond Dunbar is, without question, a man who's got a whole lot going on.

74 **Who Loves the Man In The Dress?**
You seen 'her' on bus, riding the subway, or maybe at the mall. G. B. Mann doesn't skirt the issue in this exclusive.

78 **CLOSER than CLOSE**
Even the most loving couples can get bored in bed after a while. Here learn ways to use intimacy to rekindle those passion fires.

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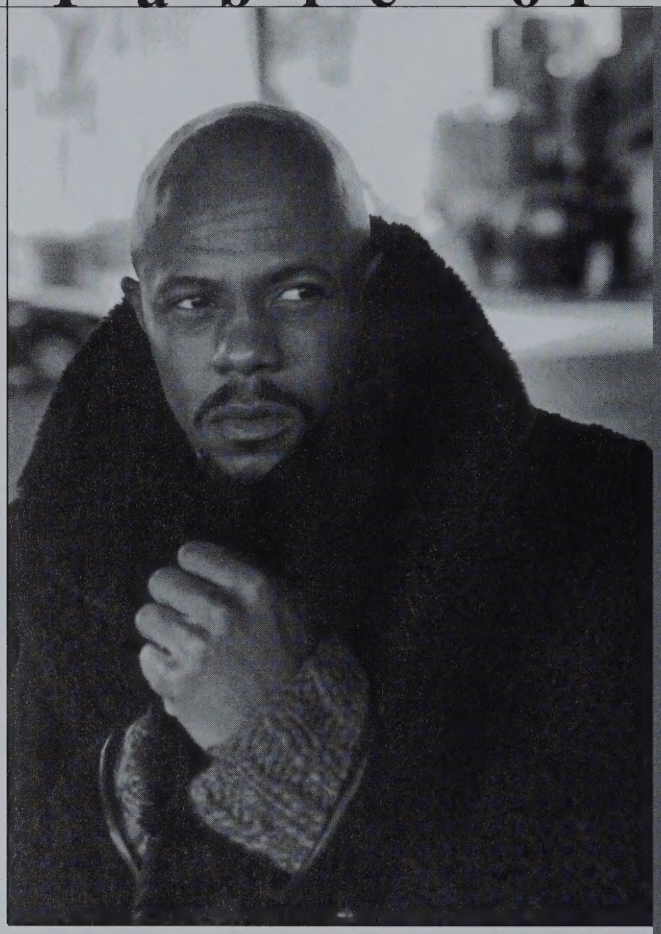

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64 ShelfLife
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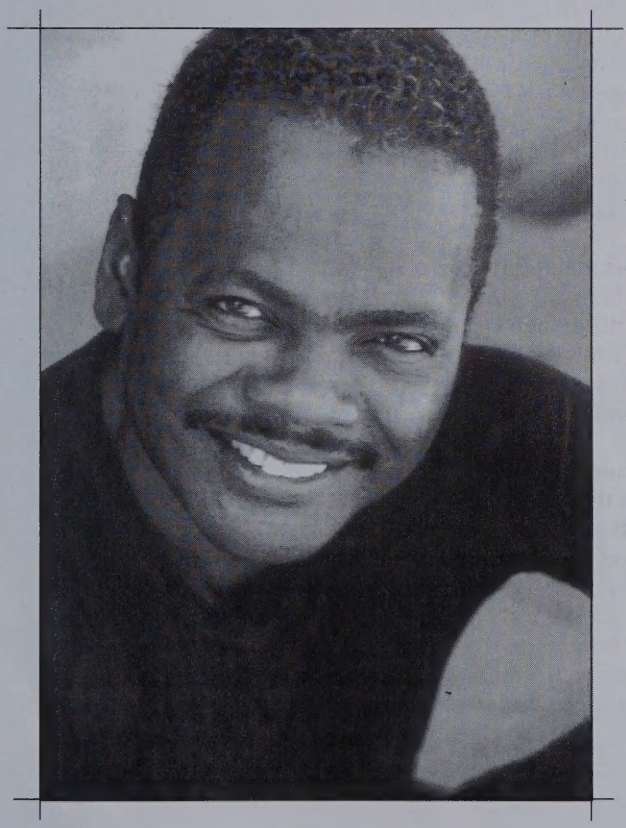
76 Piece of Mind
Could the rate of new HIV infections in our community be reduce if gay men would reduce the rate of anal sex?

80 Final Destination
Belize was visited by 98 million travelers in the past 5 years. What is all the hype? Majestic mountains, cavernous caves, barrier reefs to name a few!

90 Legendary
The original disco diva, SYLVESTER, took his style to mainstream America. His versatile 14 albums include crucial contributions to the disco songbook.

Donia Elizabeth Allen sat down with *Soul Food*'s Rockmond Dunbar. She shares her interview "The Rock" on page 48. "I found him easy to talk to and very open about what inspired him to play a role opposite gay brothers in *PUNKS*." Donia has written for Volume.com, Bet.com and currently has a monthly column in *Honey* magazine. In addition, she has published poems in *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* and in *The Madison Review*. Her first piece of literary criticism, "The Role of the Blues in Gayl Jones's Fiction" will appear in the Winter 2002 issue of *Callaloo: A Journal of African American and African Arts and Letters*. She lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.



Stanley Bennet Clay received 3 NAACP Theatre Awards and 3 Drama-Logue Awards for writing, producing and directing the stage play RITUAL. The recipient of the International Writers & Artists Edna Crutchfield Founder's Literary Achievement Award and Genre Magazine's Role Model to the Gay Community Award, Clay is the author of two novels, DIVA and IN SEARCH OF PRETTY YOUNG BLACK MEN. For 10 years the Los Angeles, California resident published and edited SBC magazine. On page 18, Clay interviews Mary Wilson as she prepares to tour the US in Duke Ellington's *Sophisticated Ladies*.

Holding It Down

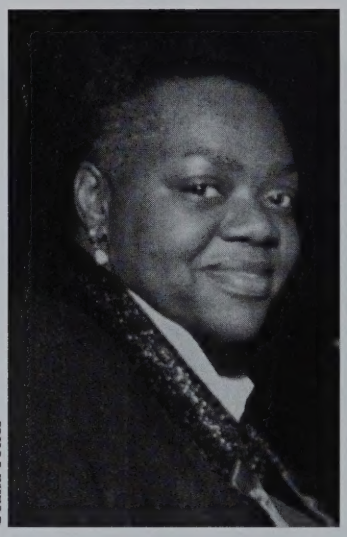
have a great story idea?

This is a call for entries. Journalist, if you have fresh ideas to share with Venus readers and samples of your published work, we want to hear frm you! Venus Magazine, Attn: Malcolm Venerable, P. O. Box 150 Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706, or call 800/642-7535 or e-mail editor@venusmagazine.com.

Correction

In Volume 7 Number 6, December/ January 2002, 'DEVOTION, 4 Gay Women Share Their Passions and Their Pets' the images of the cat owners, Toni Thomas & Boxer and Leslie Pilgrim & Mister were transposed. We regret the error.

Nikki Hopewell, contributing editor, [not pictured] is a freelance copy editor and writer based in Chicago. "I'm a huge fan of Venus magazine, and I'm delighted to be working to help make it even better." Its no secret that Venus has long needed a tough copy chief. Nikki's job is to make sure our copy reads tightly and consistantly.



Geana Jones

people are still having sex

Welcome to our first issue ever Sex issue!

Discussing sexuality in a public forum has always been a challenge for Black folks. On one hand, we like to pretend its not happening at all. ["I don't put my business in the street!"] But just beyond this veil of privacy there's a whole lot of bed rocking going on! We admit that this is a departure from our normally sedate editorial but after eight years of carefully avoiding the subject, we feel its time. After all, even in the face of AIDS, PEOPLE ARE STILL HAVING SEX! In fact, according to the Venus Online Sex Survey, folks in our community aren't just having sex, they are intensely enjoying it! Check out the survey results on page 78.

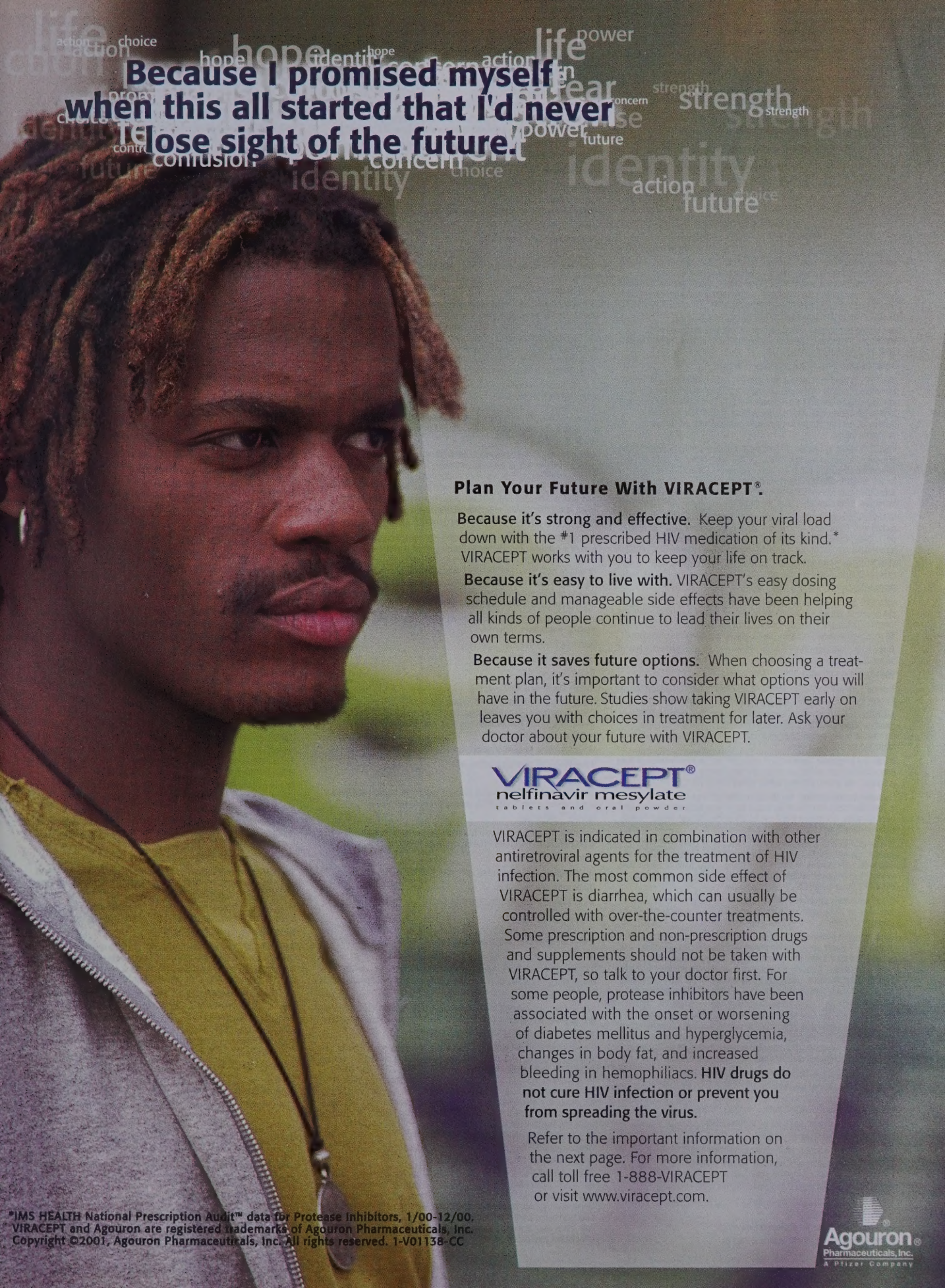
Speaking of all things sexy, *Soul Food*'s Rockmond Dunbar has been voted by the Venus staff as 'The Sexiest Man on Television.' Although Dunbar is as straight as an arrow [. . . ultra fine girlfriend!] he has become a black gay icon since his appearance in Urban World Film's *PUNKS*. Combined with Donia Allen's exclusive interview and Dunbar's sensual images, we give you 'The Rock,' a man with the heart of a saint and the body of a GOD. See for yourself, page 48.

Then its all eyes on LA. We've all wondered from time to time what really goes on in the mind of a man who has the balls to wear make up and a dress in public. Who is he? Who is in his life giving him loving support like my wife gives me? In G. B. Mann's 'Who Loves The Man in the Dress?' we're treated to a rare conversation between Mann and an everyday 'woman' in Los Angeles. Check page 74. Baby Girl has got it goin' on!

Finally, the one thing we want you to take from this issue is how to get the kind of loving you really want by practicing intimacy. On page 78 author Annette Segal spells out 9 ways you can learn to get 'Closer Than Close.'

Be safe!

Charlene Cothran



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Because it saves future options. When choosing a treatment plan, it's important to consider what options you will have in the future. Studies show taking VIRACEPT early on leaves you with choices in treatment for later. Ask your doctor about your future with VIRACEPT.

VIRACEPT®
nelfinavir mesylate
tablets and oral powder

VIRACEPT is indicated in combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV infection. The most common side effect of VIRACEPT is diarrhea, which can usually be controlled with over-the-counter treatments. Some prescription and non-prescription drugs and supplements should not be taken with VIRACEPT, so talk to your doctor first. For some people, protease inhibitors have been associated with the onset or worsening of diabetes mellitus and hyperglycemia, changes in body fat, and increased bleeding in hemophiliacs. **HIV drugs do not cure HIV infection or prevent you from spreading the virus.**

Refer to the important information on the next page. For more information, call toll free 1-888-VIRACEPT or visit www.viracept.com.

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VIRACEPT®

(nelfinavir mesylate)

Tablets and Oral Powder

Information for Patients

about VIRACEPT® (Vi-ra-cept)

Generic Name: nelfinavir (nel-FIN-na-veer) mesylate

For the Treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection

Please read this information carefully before taking VIRACEPT. Also, please read this leaflet each time you renew the prescription, just in case anything has changed. This is a summary and not a replacement for a careful discussion with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIRACEPT when you start taking this medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when taking VIRACEPT and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

Alert: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with VIRACEPT. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH VIRACEPT".

WHAT IS VIRACEPT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

VIRACEPT is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs in the treatment of people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Infection with HIV leads to the destruction of CD4 T cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of CD4 cells have been destroyed, the infected person develops acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).

VIRACEPT works by blocking HIV protease (a protein-cutting enzyme), which is required for HIV to multiply. VIRACEPT has been shown to significantly reduce the amount of HIV in the blood. Although VIRACEPT is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, VIRACEPT can help reduce your risk for death and illness associated with HIV. Patients who took VIRACEPT also had significant increases in the number of CD4 cell count.

VIRACEPT should be taken together with other antiretroviral drugs such as Retrovir® (zidovudine, AZT), Epivir® (lamivudine, 3TC), or Zerit® (stavudine, d4T). Taking VIRACEPT in combination with other antiretroviral drugs reduces the amount of HIV in the body (viral load) and raises CD4 counts.

VIRACEPT may be taken by adults, adolescents, and children 2 years of age or older. Studies in infants younger than 2 years of age are now taking place.

DOES VIRACEPT CURE HIV OR AIDS?

VIRACEPT is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking VIRACEPT may still develop opportunistic infections or other conditions associated with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections, and Kaposi's sarcoma.

There is no proof that VIRACEPT can reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

WHO SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT TAKE VIRACEPT?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether VIRACEPT is appropriate for you. In making your decision, the following should be considered:

Allergies: If you have had a serious allergic reaction to VIRACEPT, you must not take VIRACEPT. You should also inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist of any known allergies to substances such as other medicines, foods, preservatives, or dyes.

If you are pregnant: The effects of VIRACEPT on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

If you are breast-feeding: You should discuss with your doctor the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that it can be transmitted through breast-feeding. **Women should not breast-feed if they have HIV.**

Children: VIRACEPT is available for the treatment of children 2 through 13 years of age with HIV. There is a powder form of VIRACEPT that can be mixed with milk, baby formula, or foods like pudding. Instructions on how to take VIRACEPT powder can be found in a later section that discusses how VIRACEPT Oral Powder should be prepared.

If you have liver disease: VIRACEPT has not been studied in people with liver disease. If you have liver disease, you should tell your doctor before taking VIRACEPT.

Other medical problems: Certain medical problems may affect the use of VIRACEPT. Some people taking protease inhibitors have developed new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Some people with hemophilia have had increased bleeding. It is not known whether the protease inhibitors caused these problems. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have hemophilia types A and B, diabetes mellitus, or an increase in thirst and/or frequent urination.

Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking protease inhibitors. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the face, legs and arms may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

CAN VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER MEDICATIONS?

VIRACEPT may interact with other drugs, including those you take without a prescription. You must discuss with your doctor any drugs that you are taking or are planning to take before you take VIRACEPT.

Medicines you should <u>not</u> take with VIRACEPT:

Propulsid® (cisapride, for heartburn)

Cordarone® (amiodarone, for irregular heartbeat)

Quinidine (for irregular heartbeat), also known as Quinaglute®, Cardioquin®, Quinidex®, and others

Ergot derivatives (Cafergot® and others, for migraine headache)

Halcion® (triazolam)

Versed® (midazolam)

Mevacor® (lovastatin, for cholesterol lowering)

Zocor® (simvastatin, for cholesterol lowering)

Taking the above drugs with VIRACEPT may cause serious and/or life-threatening adverse events.

Rifampin® (for tuberculosis), also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®

This drug reduces blood levels of VIRACEPT.

Dose reduction required if you take VIRACEPT with: Mycobutin® (rifabutin, for MAC); you will need to take a lower dose of Mycobutin.

A change of therapy should be considered if you are taking VIRACEPT with:

Phenobarbital

Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)

Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)

These agents may reduce the amount of VIRACEPT in your blood and make it less effective.

Oral contraceptives ("the pill")

If you are taking the pill to prevent pregnancy, you should use a different type of contraception since VIRACEPT may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.

Special considerations

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with VIRACEPT, talk to your doctor about possible drug interactions and side effects. If you take Viagra and VIRACEPT together, you may be at increased risk of side effects of Viagra such as low blood pressure, visual changes, and penile erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, you should seek immediate medical assistance to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

It is not recommended to take VIRACEPT with the cholesterol-lowering drugs Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible drug interactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between VIRACEPT and Lipitor® (atorvastatin) and Baycol® (cerivastatin); talk to your doctor before you take either of these cholesterol reducing drugs with VIRACEPT.

Taking St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort with VIRACEPT is not recommended. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or are planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease VIRACEPT levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to VIRACEPT or cross resistance to other antiretroviral drugs.

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE TAKEN WITH OTHER ANTI-HIV DRUGS?

Taking VIRACEPT together with other anti-HIV drugs increases their ability to fight the virus. It also reduces the opportunity for resistant viruses to grow. Based on your history of taking other anti-HIV medicine, your doctor will direct you on how to take VIRACEPT and other anti-HIV medicines. These drugs should be taken in a certain order or at specific times. This will depend on how many times a day each medicine should be taken. It will also depend on whether it should be taken with or without food.

Nucleoside analogues: No drug interaction problems were seen when VIRACEPT was given with:

Retrovir (zidovudine, AZT)

Epivir (lamivudine, 3TC)

Zerit (stavudine, d4T)

Videx® (didanosine, ddI)

If you are taking both Videx (ddI) and VIRACEPT:
Videx should be taken without food, on an empty stomach. Therefore, you should take VIRACEPT with food one hour after or more than two hours before you take Videx.

Nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs):

When VIRACEPT is taken together with:

Viramune® (nevirapine)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood is unchanged. A dose adjustment is not needed when VIRACEPT is used with Viramune.

Sustiva™ (efavirenz)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be increased. A dose adjustment is not needed when VIRACEPT is used with Sustiva.

Other NNRTIs

VIRACEPT has not been studied with other NNRTIs.

Other protease inhibitors:

When VIRACEPT is taken together with:

Crixivan® (indinavir)

The amount of both drugs in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

Norvir™ (ritonavir)

The amount of VIRACEPT in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

Invirase® (saquinavir)

The amount of saquinavir in your blood may be increased. Currently, there are no safety and efficacy data available from the use of this combination.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF VIRACEPT?

Like all medicines, VIRACEPT can cause side effects. Most of the side effects experienced with VIRACEPT have been mild to moderate. Diarrhea is the most common side effect in people taking VIRACEPT, and most adult patients had at least mild diarrhea at some point during treatment. In clinical studies, about 15-20% of patients receiving VIRACEPT 750 mg (three tablets) three times daily or 1250 mg (five tablets) two times daily had four or more loose stools a day. In most cases, diarrhea can be controlled using antidiarrheal medicines, such as Imodium® A-D (loperamide) and others, which are available without a prescription.

Other side effects that occurred in 2% or more of patients receiving VIRACEPT include nausea, gas and rash.

There were other side effects noted in clinical studies that occurred in less than 2% of patients receiving VIRACEPT. However, these side effects may have been due to other drugs that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Except for diarrhea, there were not many differences in side effects in patients who took VIRACEPT along with other drugs compared with those who took only the other drugs. For a complete list of side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE VIRACEPT?

VIRACEPT is available only with your doctor's prescription. Your doctor may prescribe the light blue VIRACEPT Tablets either as 1250 mg (five tablets) taken two times a day or as 750 mg (three tablets) taken three times a day. VIRACEPT should always be taken with a meal or a light snack. VIRACEPT tablets are film-coated to help make the tablets easier to swallow.

Take VIRACEPT exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not increase or decrease any dose or the number of doses per day. Also, take this medicine for the exact period of time that your doctor has instructed. **Do not stop taking VIRACEPT without first consulting with your doctor, even if you are feeling better.**

Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give VIRACEPT to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

The dosing of VIRACEPT may be different for you than for other patients. **Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.** The amount of VIRACEPT in the blood should remain somewhat consistent over time. Missing doses will cause the concentration of VIRACEPT to decrease; therefore, **you should not miss any doses.** However, if you miss a dose, you should take the dose as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose and future doses as originally scheduled.

Dosing in adults (including children 14 years of age and older)

The recommended adult dose of VIRACEPT is 1250 mg (five tablets) taken two times a day or 750 mg (three tablets) taken three times a day. Each dose should be taken with a meal or light snack.

Dosing in children 2 to 13 years of age

The VIRACEPT dose in children depends on their weight. The recommended dose is 20 to 30 mg/kg (or 9 to 14 mg/pound) per dose, taken three times daily with a meal or light snack. This can be administered either in tablet form or, in children unable to take tablets, as VIRACEPT Oral Powder.

Dose instructions will be provided by the child's doctor. The dose will be given three times daily using the measuring scoop provided, a measuring teaspoon, or one or more tablets depending on the weight and age of the child. The amount of oral powder or tablets to be given to a child is described in the chart below.

Pediatric Dose to Be Administered Three Times Daily

Body Weight		Number of Level Scoops*	Number of Level Teaspoons†	Number of Tablets
Kg	Lb			
7 to <8.5	15.5 to <18.5	4	1	—
8.5 to <10.5	18.5 to <23	5	1 1/4	—
10.5 to <12	23 to <26.5	6	1 1/2	—
12 to <14	26.5 to <31	7	1 3/4	—
14 to <16	31 to <35	8	2	—
16 to <18	35 to <39.5	9	2 1/4	—
18 to <23	39.5 to <50.5	10	2 1/2	2
≥23	≥50.5	15	3 3/4	3

In measuring oral powder, the scoop or teaspoon should be level.

* 1 level scoop contains 50 mg of VIRACEPT. Use only the scoop provided with your VIRACEPT bottle.

† 1 level teaspoon contains 200 mg of VIRACEPT. Note: **A measuring teaspoon used for dispensing medication** should be used for measuring VIRACEPT Oral Powder. Ask your pharmacist to make sure you have a medication dispensing teaspoon.

How should VIRACEPT Oral Powder be prepared?

The oral powder may be mixed with a small amount of water, milk, formula, soy formula, soy milk, dietary supplements, or dairy foods such as pudding or ice cream. Once mixed, the entire amount must be taken to obtain the full dose.

Do **not** mix the powder with any acidic food or juice, such as orange or grapefruit juice, apple juice, or apple sauce, because this may create a bitter taste.

Once the powder is mixed, it may be stored at room temperature or refrigerated for up to 6 hours. Do **not** heat the mixed dose once it has been prepared.

Do **not** add water to bottles of oral powder.

VIRACEPT powder is supplied with a scoop for measuring. For help in determining the exact dose of powder for your child, please ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

VIRACEPT Oral Powder contains aspartame, a low-calorie sweetener, and therefore should not be taken by children with phenylketonuria (PKU).

HOW SHOULD VIRACEPT BE STORED?

Keep VIRACEPT and all other medicines out of the reach of children. Keep bottle closed and store at room temperature (between 59°F and 86°F) away from sources of moisture such as a sink or other damp place. Heat and moisture may reduce the effectiveness of VIRACEPT.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

Discuss all questions about your health with your doctor. If you have questions about VIRACEPT or any other medication you are taking, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You can also call 1.888.VIRACEPT (1.888.847.2237) toll free.

Call 1.888.VIRACEPT

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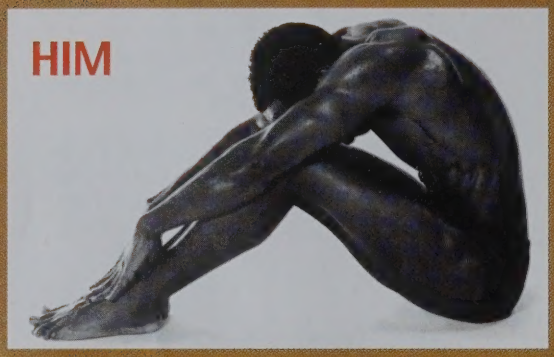
Grown and Gone

For 50 years, Vivian Hewitt and her late husband, John, amassed a treasure trove of art created by African Americans, and now the world will have a chance to see and experience them at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Okla. "In a sense, the paintings became our children," said Vivian Hewitt. "Now we focus on celebrating how the collection will be used to educate and promote African-American artists." For more information, visit www.gilcrease.org.



Philadelphia fashion and commercial photographer Bryan Mell has unveiled "HIM ... A Tribute to the Black Male Aesthetic," a sizzling collection of stills that highlights the timeless beauty of the black male. Originals and cards available at Giovanni's Room, Philadelphia, Pa.

Picture Perfect

With a portfolio boasting Janet, Diana, Madonna, and Naomi, lauded portrait photographer Mario Testino is sharing his celebrated images at the first ever Testino Gallery Exhibition at the National Portrait gallery in London. The exhibit runs through June 2, 2002.

FAGGOT on the Rise

Written and performed by prolific Atlanta-based artist Lynwoodt Benard, *FAGGOT*, as it is bluntly called, was recently performed to much acclaim at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, N.C. The story of a young man's homoerotic rite of passage, *FAGGOT* runs the gamut from spiritual warfare to self-salvation, making rape, alcoholism and attempted suicide stops along the way.

Benard hopes his show can help "black gay men know that who they are is enough. Period. And [they should] love themselves regardless." The only gay-themed play at the Winston-Salem Festival, Benard thought he might have problems pulling an audience, "but the family came out, as well as general supporters and the curious."

Actress Loretta Divine also stepped in to help. "There's a mother's voice-over in the production and she came aboard and did it for free!

"She was wonderful. She said she had a lot of black gay friends and that black folks need to hear this."

The play is slated for a June production in San Francisco; plus Jomandi Productions, Atlanta's only African-American theatre company, known for avoiding overtly gay material, is now considering the show, bringing *FAGGOT* full circle.

The Art Of Ansel Pitcairn

One staple in the life of Brooklyn artist Ansel Pitcairn has been his love for the visual and creative arts of all types. Born in London, Pitcairn is the son of Trinidadian parents who migrated to America in the early '70s. He earned his master's in illustration from New York's School of Visual Arts where he taught for several years afterward. Displayed above is a work from his Indigenous Series. Dutton books is publishing Pitcairn's first illustrated book for children, *Twenty Portraits of Famous African-Americans*, **written by Tonya Bolden.**

sophisticated mary

words by Stanley Bennett Clay

Original Supreme Mary Wilson has been out all morning looking at brownstones in Harlem, N.Y. She makes it back home just in time for our early afternoon interview. The last time I saw the beautiful 58-year-old legend was last year at the Sunset Junction Street Fair in Los Angeles. She wowed the crowd with a down-home graciousness as famous as her glamour and boasted a determination that has kept her a cultural force to be reckoned with for parts of five decades. Despite the ups and downs of a long and winding career and one personal crisis after another, Mary Wilson was and is a living example of a survivor.

"I feel that a lot of our early traditional music has been so overlooked. I want to keep that music alive for future generations."

"I was in a car accident where I almost lost my life. I did lose my son. That prompted me to make some major decisions about my life. And one of them was [that] I decided it was time to make a major move and to keep myself very, very busy. I always wanted to attend college, I always wanted to do Broadway, and so, having had that near brush with death, I decided to pursue everything in life I wanted to pursue."

In 1995, she left Beverly Hills and relocated to New York where she pursued an acting career on the legitimate stage and earned an Associate's of Arts degree from NYU. Today, Mary is touring the country as the star of her own production of *Sophisticated Ladies*, the tribute to jazz great Duke Ellington. Wilson's version will mark the first time since the late 1980s that this American treasure has toured nationally.

By the end of the 1930s, Ellington would write classic compositions that defined the entire decade: "It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got That Swing" and "Sophisticated Lady," to name a few. "I feel that a lot of our early traditional music has been so overlooked. I want to keep that music alive for future generations; that Afro-American tradition has got to stay alive in the new generation's minds so that it will not be lost."

Keeping her own legacy alive is also of vital importance, prompting a bittersweet decision that reverberated throughout the pop music world.

"You know, people always say, 'We're glad about the decision you made [not to do The Supremes Reunion Tour]', but I'm not glad about having had to make that decision. I would have preferred to have been on the tour. But sometimes in life you're given certain life experiences that give you the knowledge and wisdom to know what's important to you in your life. I realized what's important to me is my integrity."

Author, actress, singer, survivor, Wilson now adds theatrical producer to her list of accomplishments. Perhaps the very thing that has prepared her best is knowing how to take care of herself first. "Being a woman, I'm constantly buying the little creams and going to my face places, and getting my massages and doing those things. At 58, you do have to do a little bit more."

Wilson has come through her share of adversities. Her latest book features a chapter entitled "Theft of a Dream," which details how she lost the name "The Supremes" to Motown. "I do wonder why so many things I've started I'm not able to finish. I believe that sometimes in life, somewhere we made these decisions and we have to follow through with them, so if it was my decision to have a hard life --I just wake up every morning, smile and feel blessed and keep on going with one foot in front of the other. And let me tell you, I love what I do, I love who I am. We all would like to avoid life's hardships. They gives you lines, honey. And I don't like lines!"

Sophisticated Ladies will play 32 U.S. cities. For national tour information, visit www.marywilson.com.

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Photo of Original Broadway Cast by Christopher Kolk

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FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Shequida

more than a woman

words by Walter Greene

He is not your ordinary drag performer who lip-syncs and glows in pure fantasy. Shequida sings for real, and in his stunning stage performance, the willowy beauty gives the audience a slice of his own life. First and foremost, Shequida is a Julliard trained opera singer and has been singing and entertaining since he was 5 years old. "I saw my first opera when I was 14. I saw the New York City

The highlight of his show is a segment called "The Three Divas" in which he impersonates Jessye Norman, Maria Callas and Kathleen Battle singing on stage together.

Opera do Boito's *Mefistofele* with Samuel Ramey singing the title role. When the trumpets blared and the most beautiful voices filled the room, I was spellbound. When the lights came up and I saw the costumes and the set, I was hooked. It was beautiful, I love the drama in it and the style of writing," recalled Shequida who was born Gary Hall in Jamaica, West Indies. When he was 12 years old, the family migrated to Manhattan, N.Y., and he attended La Guardia High School for the Performing Arts before going to Julliard.

Now, when Shequida hits the stage, it's like pure magic. The air of professionalism is ever present. Every move, every nuance of his performance is that of a true star. The gowns, the hair, the makeup is all perfection, and teamed with the amazing voice, Shequida is truly a stunning act worthy of bravos. The highlight of his show is when Shequida does a segment called "The Three Divas" in which he impersonates Jessye Norman, Maria Callas and Kathleen Battle singing onstage together. Shequida captures the essence of these divas utilizing her powerful vocals to bring these woman to the audience with great comedic flair. Using his five-octave range, this talented performer also eases effortlessly into classic standards like "Fly Me To The Moon," "Luck Be A Lady Tonight" and "Where E'er You Walk."

"The drag is just a part of the illusion. I am a gender illusionist," Shaquida said. "I like to make it so you can't tell where the eyelashes begin and the glue ends, where the wig begins and the fake nails start. Being in drag is all part of the glamour. . . It's all part of being an entertainer."

Shequida's talents are vast. He's been a regualar on the ABC soap opera *One Life To Live* where he plays the bartender with a secret . . . the campy Wendi Mercury. He has done the Manhattan club circuit and has also toured Europe. Shequida spent three consecutive years performing in Vienna, Paris, Berlin and Hamburg and had to have bodyguards in Tel Aviv. "My show is not just a drag show, it's a show for everybody. That's why we promote the show to the public in general and not just the gay community. The fact that I'm in drag has nothing to do with it. If you go to *Cats* and you see the person up there singing "Memory" in a cat suit, you don't think that person lives like that during the day, do you?"

Maria Emilia Breyer
rhythm's sister

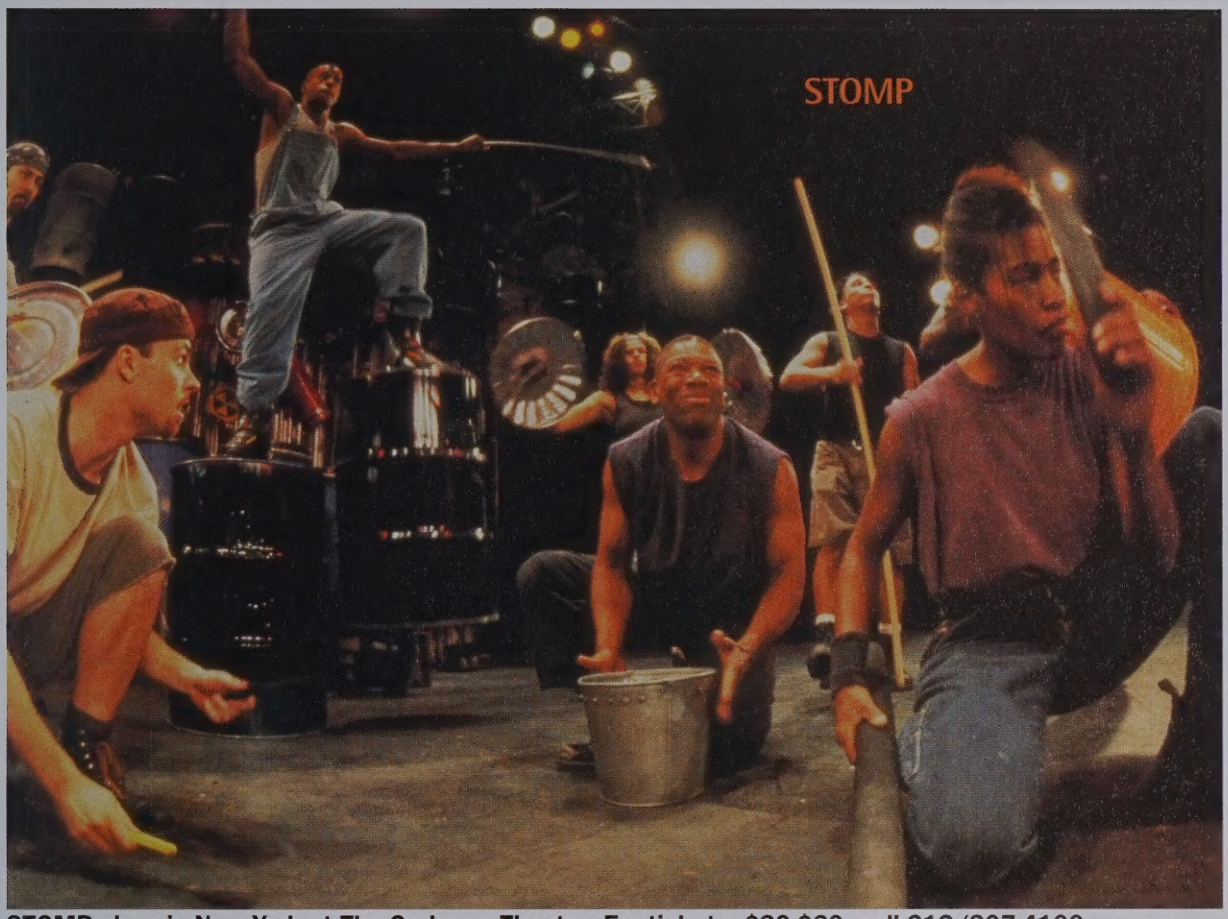
Brazilian-born percussionist, Maria Breyer takes time from her schedule to talk to *Venus* about performing in the international sensation, *STOMP*. Oh, and she happens to be out and proud. She enjoys the openness of New York and reports on how closed lesbian life is in her homeland.

"My parents didn't want me to play drums. Drums were for boys, so they gave me a classical guitar and piano lessons. I promptly turned the guitar over and drummed on its backside."

VENUS: How long has drumming been in your blood?
MARIA: I have been a drummer/percussionist for over 20 years. I began on trash cans, pots and pans, whatever I could get my hands on. I made my first drumsticks out of some tree branches or No. 2 pencils. Then one marvelous day I found a pair of real drumsticks in a public park. I think I still have them somewhere; I treasure them. My parents didn't want me to play drums. Drums were for boys so they gave me a classical guitar and piano lessons. I promptly turned the guitar over and drummed on its backside. I didn't have the patience for the piano, plus it was too big to carry around.

VENUS: How did you prepare for *STOMP*?
MARIA: I didn't really prepare myself for the show. It just kinda fell into my path. I didn't even know about the show until a friend took me to see it. Then about three months later, the same friend called me and persuaded me to go to the audition. I auditioned twice before I got called back. Somehow I ended up in it. The drumming part was easy for me, but the dancing was a little more challenging. As a drummer, I was used to using the upper part of my body more. I had to beg my feet to cooperate with the rest of me. Thank God I didn't have to shake my ass. I am Brazilian. I can Samba, but *STOMP* has nothing to do with that kind of movement.

VENUS: How is "lesbian life" experienced in Brazil?
MARIA: Life for lesbians in Brazil is very much still closeted. It's more accepted if you are a man. It's kind of like don't ask, don't tell. There are some famous women singers who are out. For some reason it's OK for artists to be out, but for the regular gal, it's still very difficult. In fact, we just lost a great singer named Cassia Eller. She passed just before the new year. She was *very* out, an in-your-face strong, outspoken lesbian. Cassia was somewhat of a spokesperson for the gay community in Brazil. She made it a little easier for us. We'll miss her very much.



STOMP plays in New York at The Orpheum Theatre. For tickets, $30-$60, call 212/307-4100.

Life for lesbians and gays is slowly changing, however. I remember being unable to speak about anything gay, and now it seems that especially in the younger generation (45 and below) it is more accepting. The media has a lot to do with it. *Queer as Folk* does play in Brazil! There are many more lesbians surfacing. I went to a gay bar in Rio last year where they were promoting the first ever "Ladies Night." The place was packed! Last year in São Paulo a woman was elected to the senate who is very gay-friendly. She believes in gay rights and has begun to shake things up one step at a time.

VENUS: Where were you on September 11th?
MARIA: My partner and I were sleeping when we got a call from a friend telling us to turn on the TV. When we saw the horror we raced up to the rooftop to see if it was really true. It was so surreal. We saw the towers come down before our eyes. It took about 15 minutes for the acid air to reach our rooftop in Brooklyn. We tasted the dust in our mouths and rubbed it from our eyes. It was true, and we were scared.

After the dust settled, things would change all over this city. Everyone was really quiet. Going to the theater in the subway, I could feel the silent tension and fear around me. One could also feel a strange kind of unity or concern. People became somehow a bit more patient and tolerant of one another. No one wanted to do anything but stay home. We agreed to take a pay cut to continue the production because Broadway and many businesses lost money. Things have settled down a bit now.

VENUS: Any new projects in the works?
MARIA: I'm just chilling out for a while. I've taken myself out of the loop to spend some time with my new partner. I had been single for so long because I toured for almost four years. I worked so much. I'm just enjoying nesting for now. I have a little something planned in Brazil next year. I'm also thinking about reviving a little percussion ensemble I used to have. . . We'll see.

one mo' time

by MILLY SCHOENBAUM
written in 1979.

A sultry, sensual night in 1926 at New Orleans' renowned Lyric Theatre is recreated in a reprisal of the jazz musical One Mo Time. The Charleston, the cakewalk and the rag are the dance rages as Vaudeville's greatest tunes blaze through the theater, a haven for such stars as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. Revisiting a starring role in the off-Broadway sensation is Vernel Bagneris, who writes and directs.

In the once-luxurious French Quarter of old New Orleans, two streets meet on the corner of Iberville and Burgundy. Implanted on the sidewalk on that historic corner is the sole word "LYRIC" in a robin's-egg blue tile. That tile is the only survivor of a fire in 1927, which destroyed a bastion of the T.O.B.A. circuit (Theatre Owners Booking Agency or, as the performers named it, Tough on Black Asses, Or Acts if you will, because it paid so little except to headliners), and left only an empty space used today as a parking lot. Would it be possible, if you stood very quietly, say at midnight on any Saturday night, to hear the ghostly reminders of the earthly sounds of black vaudeville resounding through the halls? Of such great immortals as Bessie Smith, who was a headliner on the circuit back then, or Butterbeans and Susie, Ma Rainey, Wilbur Sweatman and his clarinet, or Sweet Mama Stringbean (whose real name was Ethel Waters)? These were just some of the names who graced the Lyric Theatre's stage before the decline and slow death of T.O.B.A. during the depression.

Regardless of educational and economic level, blacks were not allowed to attend the French Opera house or the symphony, concerts and ballets that traveled to New Orleans. The Lyric Theatre, therefore, had to satisfy all levels of taste for its audiences. Imagine the eclectic spectacle of opera singers preceding black-faced comedians, or classically trained dancers following the hi-jinks of clowns and jugglers, or soulful blues and jazz before dramatic arias. The Lyric audiences would simply watch what they liked, keep their ticket stubs, and go out to smoke a cigarette while waiting until an act they liked went on.

A company traveling under the auspices of T.O.B.A. would travel "second-class" train to such cities as Memphis, Atlanta, New Orleans, but also small southern hamlets. Costumes and sets were minimal and center-stage singing or comedy routines were most popular. As one lady said, "It was your turn up, you took center-stage and let 'em know it, 'cause if they didn't like what you was doing up there, they would sure let you know it!" The audience was "all colored," but whites were allowed in the balcony to watch the Saturday midnight show only—Whites and blacks were not allowed under the same roof by law but the after-hours places in the red-light district didn't mind, and neither did the Lyric Theatre. The law simply didn't count.

The performers were expected to work with the house band on the circuit, and luckily New Orleans was blessed with great sidemen. The New Orleans band, in particular, had a fine reputation as an excellent pit band that was a pleasure to play with.

The cost of admission was twenty-five cents and that usually included someone walking away with the door prize—usually a coveted

Continued on page 87

Photography by Carl Posey (l-r) B.J. Crosby, Roz Ryan, Vernel Bagneris, and Rosalind Brown in a scene from ONE MO'TIME. *Longacre Theatre. 220 W. 48th St. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8 PM with matinees Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2PM and Sundays at 3 PM. Tickets $30-$75 through Telecharge 212.239.6200.*

Mixologist Jerri Banks

Cocktail Queen

Jerri Banks was 19 years old when she had her first sip of wine. Little did she know that swig would lead her on a journey to make her one of New York's most revered connoisseurs of wines and cocktails.

When she started out in 1975, black women were an oddity in the male-dominated wine world. Jerri pursued her passion in a roundabout way, learning "by doing" -- voraciously tasting anything she could, and paying attention to the complexity of each wine.

In Philadelphia, Jerri worked with the renowned – but then quite humble -- White Dog Café. Jerri quickly impressed owner Judy Wicks and became manager of the restaurant's beverage program. Journeys to Portugal, France and Germany added to Jerri's wine expertise.

Armed with knowledge to match her passion, Jerri trekked to New York City to try selling wine to restaurants. Although she studied and sold wine, Jerri's bartending years made her miss the customer interaction that fueled her innovative cocktail recipes and creative concoctions. She abandoned sales.

Hands-on restaurant experience took her to higher levels: She managed Cellar in the Sky, formerly located in Windows on the World; she then worked with Chef Matthew

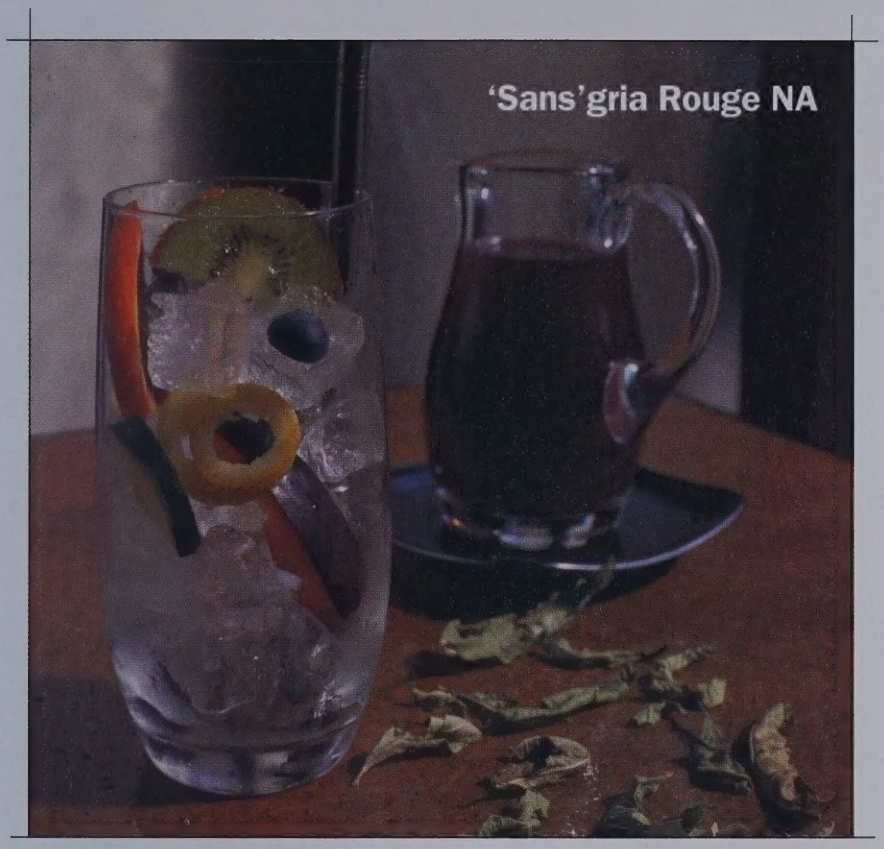
This is the ultimate adult lemonade. Combining four variations of lemony components including one herbal form, this delicate citrus cocktail tantalizes as it refreshes.

2 ozs Absolut Vodka
1 oz A. Pollentes Crème aux Citrons or Limoncello
*2 ozs Kaffir Lime-Lemon Juice Mixture**
Chilled Cocktail Glass
Kaffir Lime Leaf for garnish

Kaffir Lime-Lemon Juice
Approx. _ cup Fresh Kaffir Lime Leaves
2 cups Fresh Lemon Juice
2 cups Simple Syrup

Place all ingredients in blender and pulse blend until mixture is bright green but not completely blended. Strain through fine chinois or cheesecloth. Combine remaining ingredients with ice in cocktail shaker and shake vigorously. Strain into chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with kaffir lime leaf.

Kaffir lime leaf is a principle ingredient in many Asian cuisines. It is commonly found at Asian markets and also may be available at specialty stores. Choose leaves that are bright green. For a non-alcoholic version: Pour 3 ozs Kaffir Lime-Lemon Juice over ice and top with seltzer.



What do you drink when alcohol is neither appropriate nor desired? It looks like wine, but there the comparison ends. These verbena tea and pomegranate juice bases are perfect hosts for the aromatics–cardamom pods, star anise, allspice and citrus–used in this non-alcoholic libation.

Kenney in 1988, developing comprehensive service and beverage programs for each of his popular locations. Jerri developed some of the most sought-after house drinks, including the famous Juniperotivo.

Next stop was Fressen, in Manhattan's trendy meatpacking district. She delighted yuppies with herb infused cocktails and such fun-sounding drinks as the "Fressen-Up" and the white wine "Sans-gria." *The New York Times* called her the "High Priestess of the grape" able to drum up a "rock & roll" list when appropriate.

Now consulting with restaurants throughout New York, she's still innovating. She spearheaded *Ladies Who Launch*, a consulting service for new and established businesses, and Drink and Be Married, a Bridal Shower program that artfully pairs food and wine in synch with the themes of the wedding.

It started with Jerri's first sip 25 years ago, and she now remains immersed in the world of beverages -- learning, teaching, tasting and creating.

'Sans'gria Rouge NA

Makes approx 4 gals

4 qts Knudsens Pomegranate juice (can be found at health food stores,) 4 qts lemon verbena tea (4 qts water steeped 5 minutes with 2 cups tea leaves)
1 cup fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup cardamom pods
1/4 cup of star anise
6-10 whole allspice seeds
1 orange sliced
1 lemon sliced
1-2 cups simple syrup (equal amounts sugar and water brought to boil and cooled)
Add fresh fruits and berries for garnish.

Combine juices, tea, spices and sliced citrus. Let steep for minimum 8 hrs. Flavor will become more intense as spices remain. Strain and adjust sweetening to taste with simple syrup. Serve over ice with fresh fruits and berries.

The British are Coming!

What they failed to accom[lish through war and the imposition of taxes, the British seem to be doing through the taste buds...that is, conquering the American people. And, from all accounts, they are succeeding, thus far.

The British firm, Halewood International, through its US sibsidiary, Halewood USA, is quietly introducing Americans to Lambrini Bianco, a light, mild, while, and slightly sparklting, wine. Only this wine is made from pears and apples, not grapes.

The English have enjoyed it for years, a brisk 11 million cases annually. Now the company has turned its attention to the United States and canadian markets.

Lambrini Bianco appeals to yonger women ages 18-34 and to all consumers, including men, who are looking for an alternative to beer or the traditional wine. Its alcholic content is 6.9%. One of a kind, Lambrini Bianco has no competition in the United States and hopes to cut into the 7 million cases a year Arbor Mist category market. It is quietly succeeding. Why? Maybe because of the uniqueness of the drink.

Emboldened by the success of Lambrini Bianco, Halewood-USA, based in New Rochelle, Westchester, has also introduced Caribbean twist to the US. market. Bottoms up!

The Imperial Fez

Owners Rafih and Rita Bellejoun and staff

Don't expect the traditional setting at Atlanta Imperial Fez restaurant. It's anything but. It's like stepping off U.S. soil and into the mystical, mysterious and magical land of Morocco.

Rafih, a native of Morocco, has an eclectic background in cinema, photography, and ceramics, as evidenced by the room's rich décor.

Get comfy right from the start by removing your shoes before being escorted into the dining room, the restaurants costume. Oil burning lanterns light the way to your table and create a sensual atmosphere perfect for privacy and romance. The walls are adorned with Middle Eastern plum-textured patterns. Elaborate antique carpets seem to tell your toes a story all their own.

There's an eyeful of Morrocan history in every corner. You could almost expect to see a sultan or pasha wandering about in his stately robe and turban. Instead, you'll find the Imperial Fez's owner and host, Rafih Bellejoun and his wife, Rita, garbed in traditional attire. Rafih, a native of Morocco, has an eclectic background in cinema, photography and ceramics, as evidenced by the room's rich décor.

In 1975, Rafih opened the first of several successful restaurants in Colorado. He managed to find time to take on several other endeavors including joining a fencing club and working closely with the Winter Olympic Games. "The Imperial Fez is a culmination of all my experiences," says Rafih who opened his Atlanta restaurant in 1991. It has been a landmark in the city ever since.

A respected and celebrated businessman, Rafih has garnered many awards, including "Businessman of the Year" from the African Chamber of Commerce. He enjoys first-time guests the most. "I love sharing the rich culture of my homeland and treating our guests as royalty."

Once seated on ample floor pillows spaced about your table, it's time for the washing of hands as cleansing waters are poured from the traditional tah by your server.

For those unfamiliar with authentic Morrocan cuisine, perusing the menu may require an interpreter. For starters try Harira [lentil bean soup,] which delights the palate and warms the throat. An excellent entree selection is Lamb Maassas B'Looze [honey and almonds]. Prepare to become intoxicated with the perfect blend of sweetness, saltiness and the natural flavor of lamb. To complement this delectable meal, order a plate of vegetable and prawn couscous, all of which is eaten in the Morrocan tradition, with your fingers and hands. For dessert, Briouat, a lusciously pastry, is heavenly.

As exotic as the meal itself is the entertainment. You haven't lived until a trio of curvaceous Morrocan belly dancers wind their way to your table and flirtatiously entice you to join in. Only the brave dare, but what a dance! Veils and garments flowing, they use everything from candles to flames and swords to interpret the stories of the melodious music.

If you want to experience the wonders of a rich, exciting and sensual culture of Morroco then make a note to visit the Imperial Fez the next time you're in Atlanta.

Getting There:

The Imperial Fez is located at 285 Peachtree RD, N.E., Buckhead area of Atlanta, Georgia. Reservations are suggested. Call 404/351-0870. Dinner hours, 6pm to 11:30pm. Belly dancing nightly. Private parties by request.
www.imperialfez.com

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Alize Confit Of Shrimp with Sugarsnap Peas, Curried Pineapple and Passion Fruit Essence

INGREDIENTS:
2 cups olive oil
1 lb jumbo shrimp, about 12 peeled shrimp
1 cup sugarsnap peas, halved
1 pound baby spinach or tatsoi
1 pineapple, cut into 1 inch semi circles

Pineapple Curry Dressing
flavored with Alize essence:
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 shallots, sliced
1 cup pineapple trimmings
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon Szechuan peppercorns
2 teaspoons coriander seed
2 pieces star anise
2 tablespoon chopped ginger
1 small fennel bulb, sliced
1 cup Gold Alize
(fine French Cognac, Passion Fruit)
1 cup sherry wine vinegar
1 cup dark chicken stock
2 tablespoons curry paste
1 cup grapeseed oil
1 cup olive oil

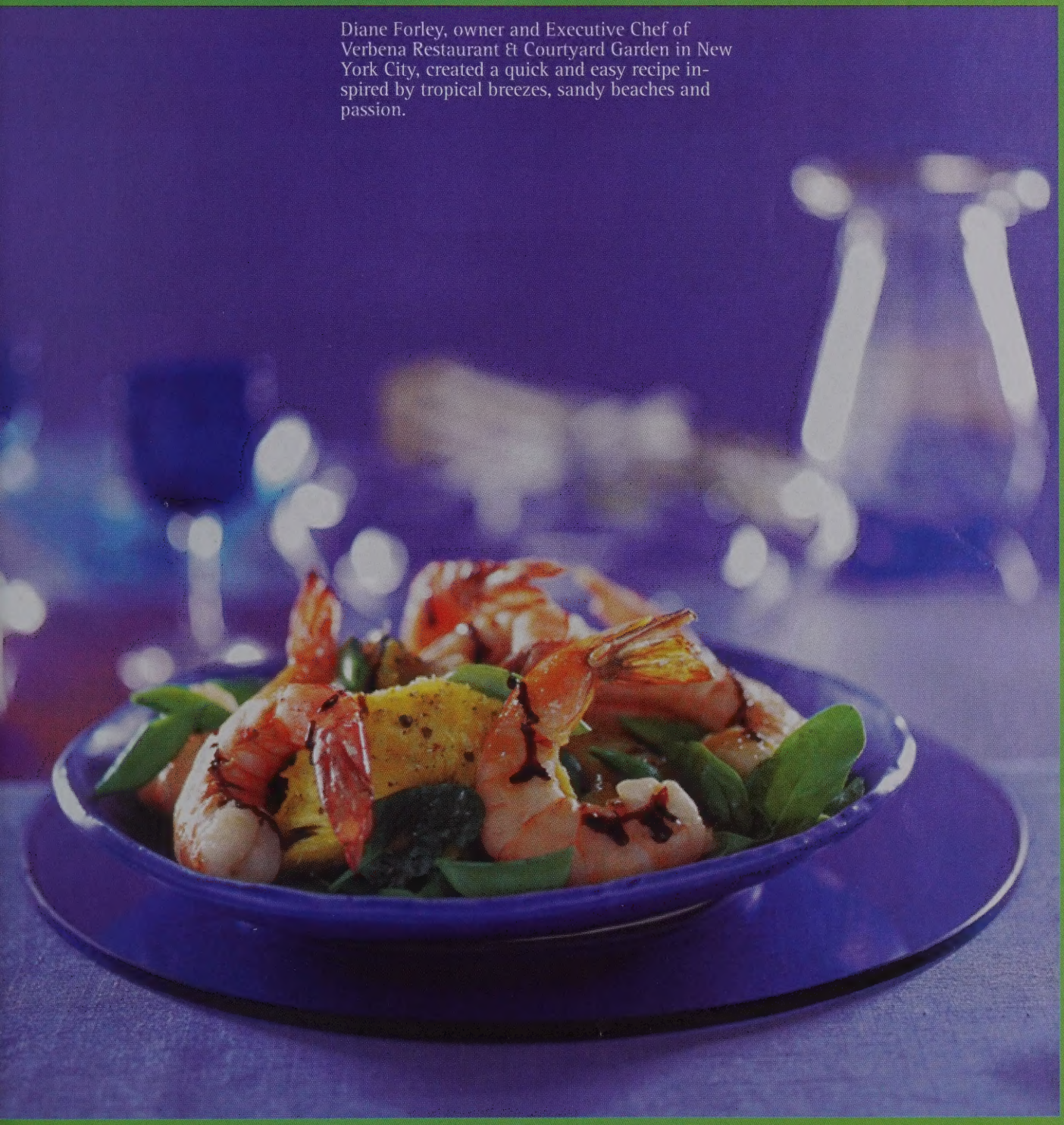
PREPARATION:
Roasted pineapple:
Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Place pineapple rounds on baking sheet. Sprinkle with ground black pepper. Bake at drying heat for two hours or until oven-dried. The pineapple will just begin to brown. Remove from oven, remove core and cut into sections.

Pineapple curry dressing:
In 4 qt. saucepot, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add shallots. Cook until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add pineapple, spices, ginger, fennel. Cook mixture until caramelized or brown in color. Add vinegar and Alize. Reduce by simmering. Add curry paste and stock. Cook over low heat until thickened. Puree mixture in food processor. Strain through chinois. Emulsify with hand blender by adding oils slowly. Season to taste.

To plate salad:
In wide bottomed saucepot, heat oil below a simmer, approximately 130 degrees. Add shrimp and cook 2-3 minutes, depending on size of the shrimp. Do not allow to boil. Remove from oil. Toss together sugarsnap peas, pineapple and tatsoi. Season with salt and curry dressing. Garnish with shrimp. Drizzle with reduced balsamic vinegar. Note: The shrimp is best served warm or at room temperature.

Alize Confit of Shrimp

Diane Forley, owner and Executive Chef of Verbena Restaurant & Courtyard Garden in New York City, created a quick and easy recipe inspired by tropical breezes, sandy beaches and passion.



inspired leather crafts

by Keyi Ko Afrikan Arts

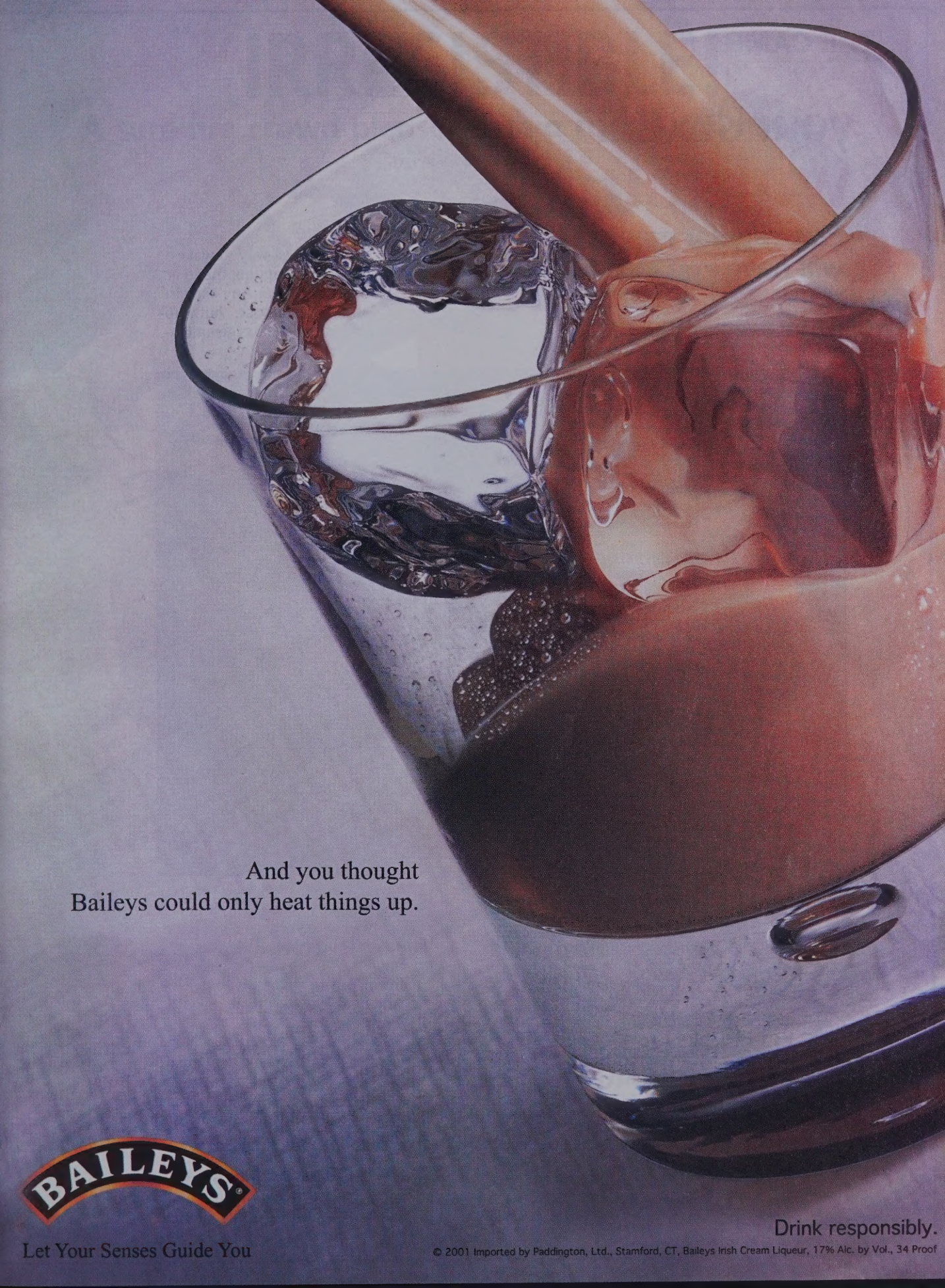
"It was the unseen hands and many voices of the ancestors that taught me."

In 1987, 12 years after migrating to Toronto, Canada, Trinidadian-born Khali Kwodwo Keyi entered York University as an undergraduate student carrying the very first bag that he had ever made. And in doing so, carried the formula that was to be his transformation. Khali soon began producing work for his friends, and nudged by their encouragement, he displayed his high-quality leather arts. His popularity as a fine artist lead to the birth of Keyi Ko Afrikan Arts.

Keyi Ko Afrikan Arts, from its inception in 1990, is dedicated to the preservation of the tradition of working with leather as well as working leather, particularly in the form of "wearable art" such as hats, bags, neck-pouches, earrings and sandals.

"Here the approach, while being of a spiritual nature, recognizes the uniqueness of those for whom the work is created."

For Brother Khali, the work is a true spiritual journey. "This work is bigger than I am, therefore it is not about me. The art is the vehicle and the work begins where the vehicle takes me. I am forever blessed to have been chosen to receive the gift of working with leather. It was the unseen hands and many voices of the Ancestors that taught me the craft."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your sexual workout

Five regular moves will have you rated Best in Bed!

Shanti B. Rangwani, M.B.B.S

The best way to wake up a sagging libido is exercise. Any exercise is "sexercise," but aerobic exercise causes oxygenation and regularly carried out, it increases the oxygen carrying capacity of your blood and thereby improves your body's efficiency in converting sugar to energy. And more energy will get you more "sugar."

In a study of 8,000 women conducted by psychologist Linda De Villers, 83 percent of those polled had engaged in some form of aerobic activity at least three times a week for a minimum of three months; of those, 25 percent reported sexual desire increased considerably after workouts.

1 The Trunk Rock

Face your partner in a sitting position, with your legs spread, and the soles of your feet touching. Now, grab your partner's hand and bend forward while she bends backwards. Alternate. This seesaw workout strengthens the back muscles and tightens the vaginal muscle.

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Photo: Joan Marcus

YOUR SEXUAL WORKOUT

Similar research conducted at the UCSD showed an increase in sexual frequency, and more satisfying foreplay, fantasies and orgasms. Not only do people who exercise have more stamina, but they also have higher testosterone levels, which stimulate parts of the brain in both men and women that are associated with sexual arousal.

Exercise may also boost sexual desire by warding off the blues, for in general, depressed people aren't very interested in sex. The mood-elevating beta endorphins released after just 10 minutes of working up a sweat are often credited for the leap in sexual desire and heightened arousal. The harder you push yourself, the longer this positive rush lasts.

Physical fitness is something you owe not just to yourself but also to your partner. Your ability to enjoy love in all its subtleties requires flexibility, excellent muscle tone, the right body weight and sexual stamina, which in most cases translates to a combination of physical stamina and apt mind control.

Enjoy these basic non-strenuous exercises that will help you achieve the minimum fitness you need to perform well in bed. Be as flexible as you wish when using these exercises. Remember, these exercises are guidelines, so feel free to explore and innovate.

2

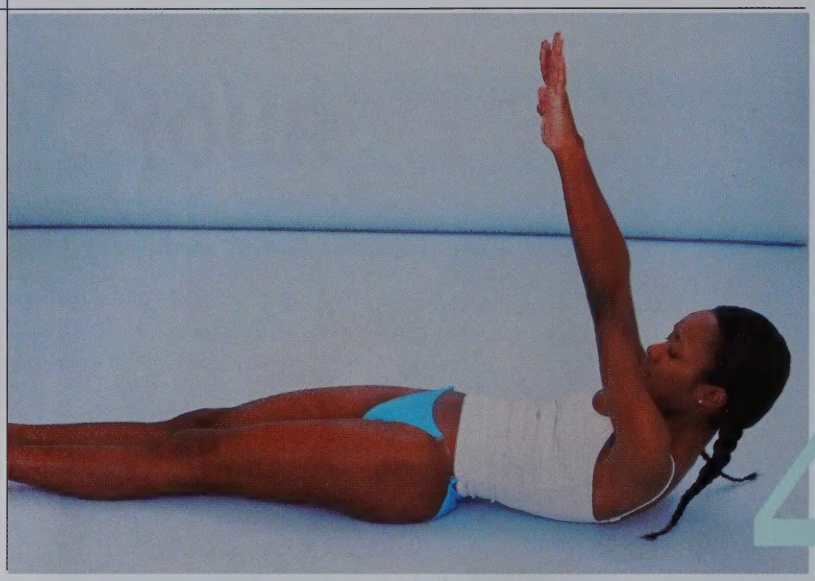
Thigh Strengthening.
Place two chairs face to face with you and your partner sitting. Hold onto her shoulders and clasp her knees from the outside with yours. Now have her try to separate her legs while you try to bring them together. Reverse after a count of six.

3

The Hula

With your hands clasped behind your head, rotate the hips clockwise and then anti-clockwise. You can perform this exercise lying on the bed, raising only your buttocks. This strengthens your lower back muscles and trains you to mesmerize your woman with the grace of a belly dancer. It also improves the rotatory movement that can make being on top such fun.

images by Jeff Gamble



4

Lie on your back and raise your arms. Then attempt to raise your upper body as far as it will go.

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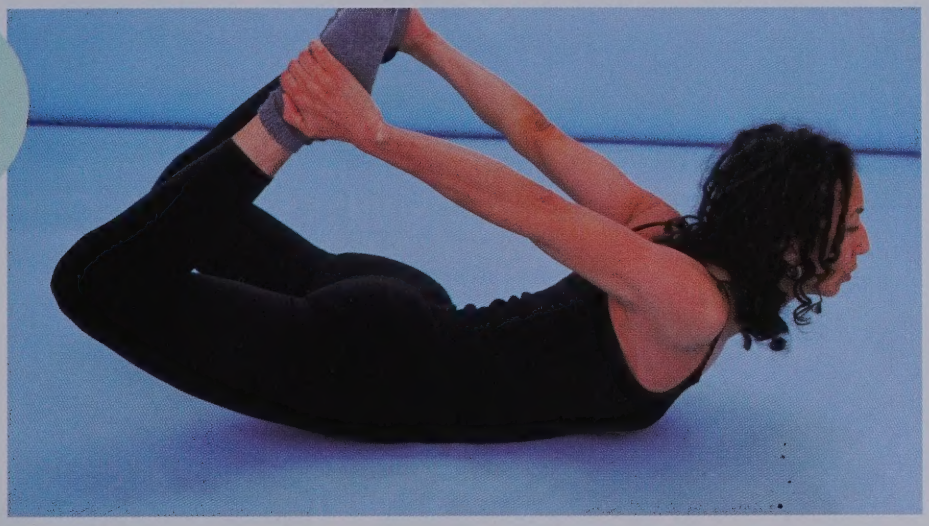
Lie face down and arch your body backwards, gripping your ankles with your hands. your body should take the shape of a bow that is being arched.

5



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Photography by Debra St. John

1. Duane Cramer, Billy Curtis, Lance Evans 2. Ave Montague (l) and Cathy Adams 3. John Derek 4. Angela Biondo and Theresa Brown 5. L Continuum (l) and Touri Monroe, Miss Gay Oakland 2001.

Festive Feature

San Francisco Black Lesbian and Gay Film Festival Draws Talent

The Black Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (BLGBT) Film Festival presented an inspiring selection of films last November at the Brava Theater Center in San Francisco. Truly a groundbreaking event, this is the first festival of its kind anywhere in the world. For three days, the festival celebrated the diversity of the Black LGBT community with 32 films and videos from the United States, Africa, Canada, Brazil and Cuba. Six of the presenting filmmakers were from the Bay Area. Sponsored by the Black Coalition on AIDS, Man2Man program, the festival's mission is to present film as an educational tool toward understanding Black multi-sexual culture.

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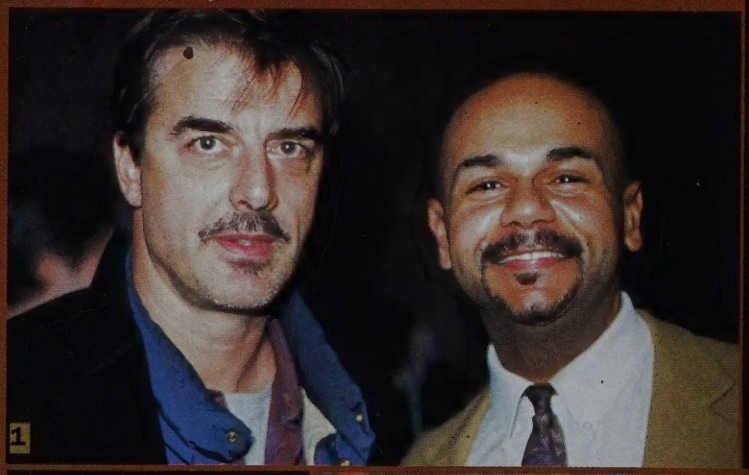
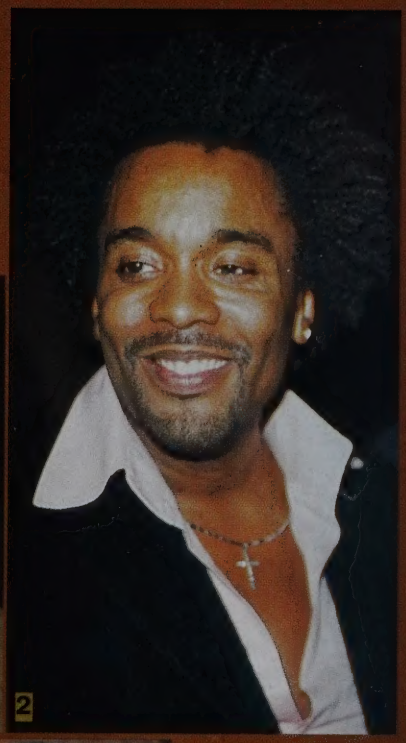
Monsters Ball

Gay Men of African Descent, GMAD receives proceeds from pre-screening of Halle Berry film in New York.





1. Actor, Chris Noth, with Earl Plante, GMAD Development Director. 2. Film producer, Lee Daniels keeps it real by inviting GMAD. 3. Tony Bennet in the house 4. Star Jones with Bill Peters, Executive Director of GMAD.

Photography by Stuart Van de Zee

welcome black folx!

Front Row, Kneeling (Left to Right): Rommell Bennett, Alonzo Reese, Shari McKoy, Cheri Toney (Center, Board Member), Johnnie Pratt (Center, Outreach Coordinator), Back Row, Standing (Left to Right): Donald Tarver, Carmen Morrison, Eddie Dobbins (Co-chair, LGADDA), Duane Cramer (Center, Board Member), Ernest Hopkins (Director of Federal Affairs, San Francisco AIDS Foundation), Charles Huff, Ken McNeely (Center, Board Member)

A warm sign stating, "Welcome Black Folks" greeted African Americans and People of African Descent to a historic meeting at the new LGBT Community Center on Wednesday, January 30, 2002. Nearly 70 Black LGBT board members, executive directors, program mangers, outreach workers, political activists, teens, elders and those merely curious gathered from throughout the Bay Area to meet with board members and staff.

continued on page 46

DUKE ELLINGTON'S
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The13th Annual Bayard Rustin Breakfast will be held at Boston's John F. Kennedy Library on April 27th and will focus on the often-neglected gay Civil Rights hero's views of social change and justice for the oppressed people. The impact of AIDS on the lives of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people of color will be discussed, as well as bridging the gap between gay men and lesbians. Cambridge city councilor E. Denise Simmons will serve as keynote speaker. For more information, email BRBreakfast@aol.com or call 617/450-1644.

millenium sistah

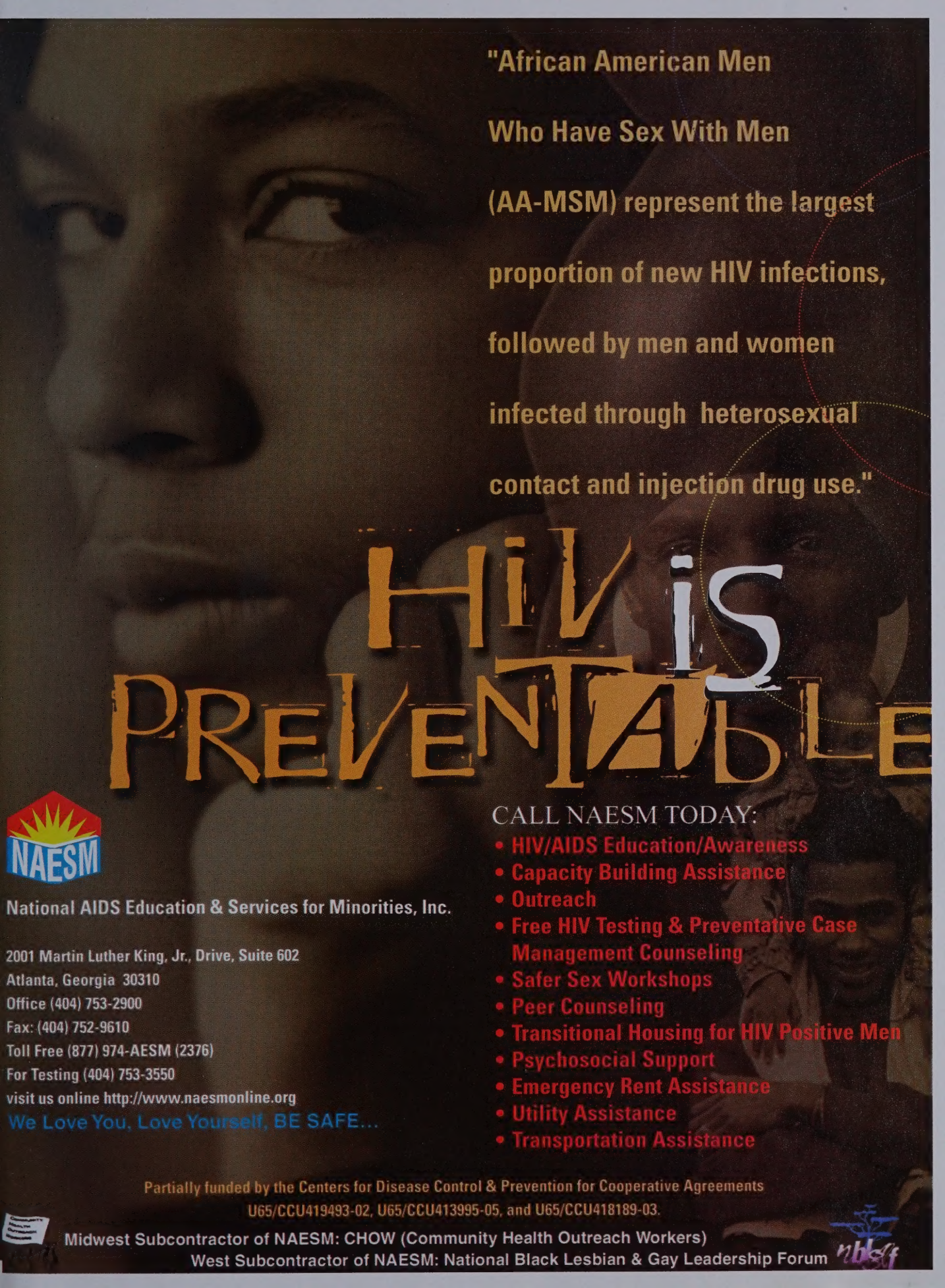
A Remedy for the Soul: Sunny Punta Cana Island, the Site of the First Millennium Sistahs' Retreat

In these times, retreats offer a renewal of the mind, body and soul. That's why Millennium Sistahs Inc., a New York based non-profit human service agency offering a variety of services for women and their families, is inviting women to experience a retreat on Punta Cana Island. Workshops will include discussions about relationships and HIV/AIDS prevention. Then enjoy refreshing activities including yoga, aerobics or relaxing massages. As president, Glenda White, says "Since September 11, we [women] need each other more now for support." For information, contact Millennium Sistahs, at 516/538-3887.

Welcome Black Folx!
continued from page 44

They discussed the purpose, vision and opportunities for people of African Descent. "As a Community Center board member, I offered the invitation and was overwhelmed by the response of the Black community. Its good to see that people care about the issues concerning our community and how The Center can help meet the goals and needs of LGBT people of African Descent," said Duane Cramer.

Representatives of The Center presented an overview of available space and services to be provided. Lesbians & Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action (LGADDA) and the Black Coalition on AIDS (BCA) are two of the 23 groups to occupy office space. The San Franscico Center, 1800 Market Street.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West Subcontractor of NAESM: National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum
nblgf

The star of Showtime Network's **Soul Food** and Urbanworld Film's **PUNKS** talks to *Venus* about redefining masculinity, his passions and upcoming projects.

The ROCK

Rockmond Dunbar is without a doubt, The Sexiest Man on Television, (and we've got proof).

words by Donia Elizabeth Allen

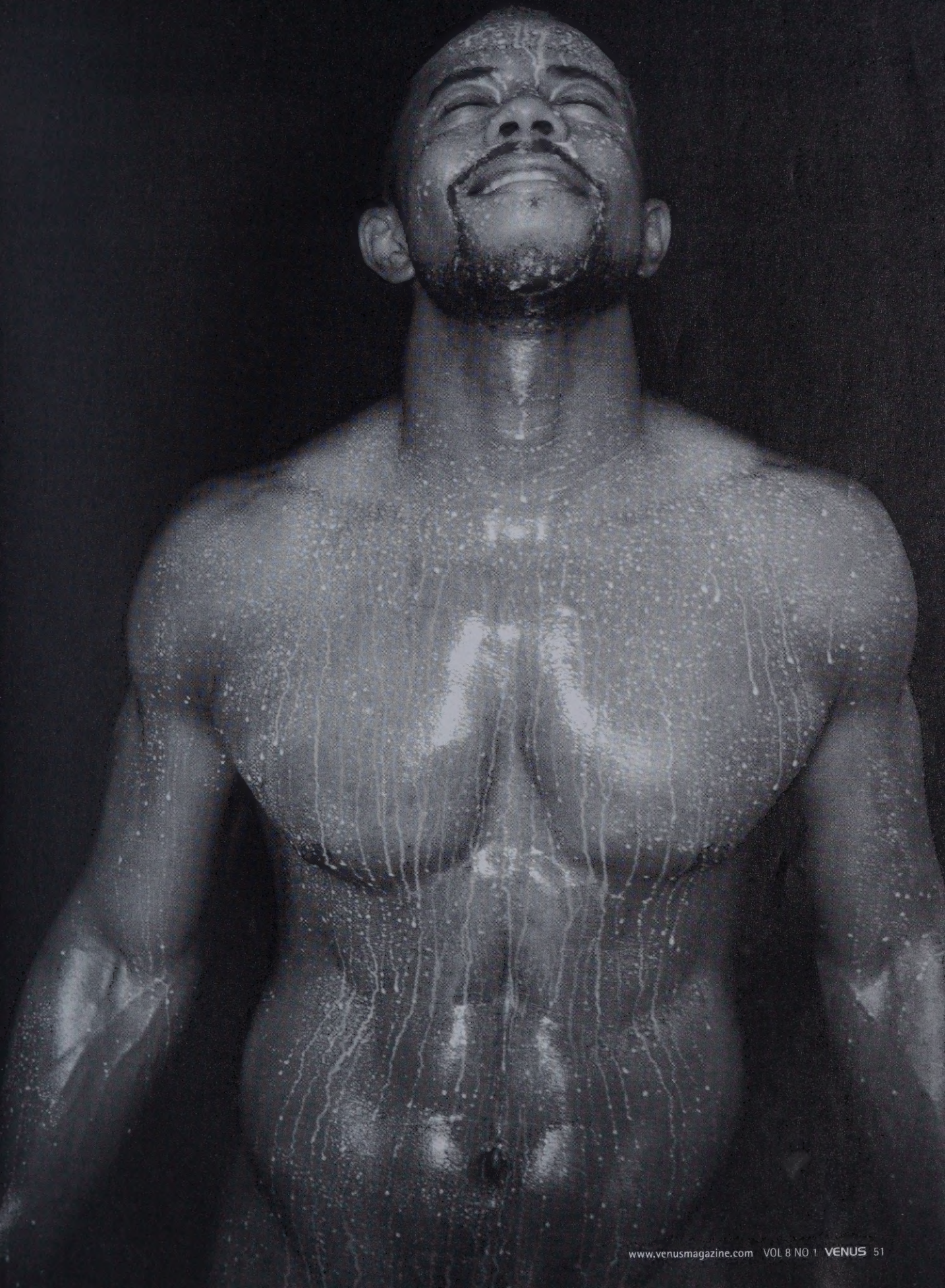
is last name harkens back to the old-school elegance of Renaissance/race man Paul Lawrence Dunbar. His first name conjures up any number of images (rock star, rock-hard, Rock Hudson), but certainly it suggests the edgier, more contemporary presence we've seen on Showtime's hit series *Soul Food*, in which Dunbar plays Kenny, and in *PUNKS*, in which Dunbar plays Darby, a musician who moves into a gay neighborhood in Los Angeles. When we meet in New York on a frigid day in December, I discover that this actor is all that his name implies, and more: bold, multi-talented and a sex symbol in both the gay and straight communities. Rockmond Dunbar is, without question, a man who's got a whole lot going on.

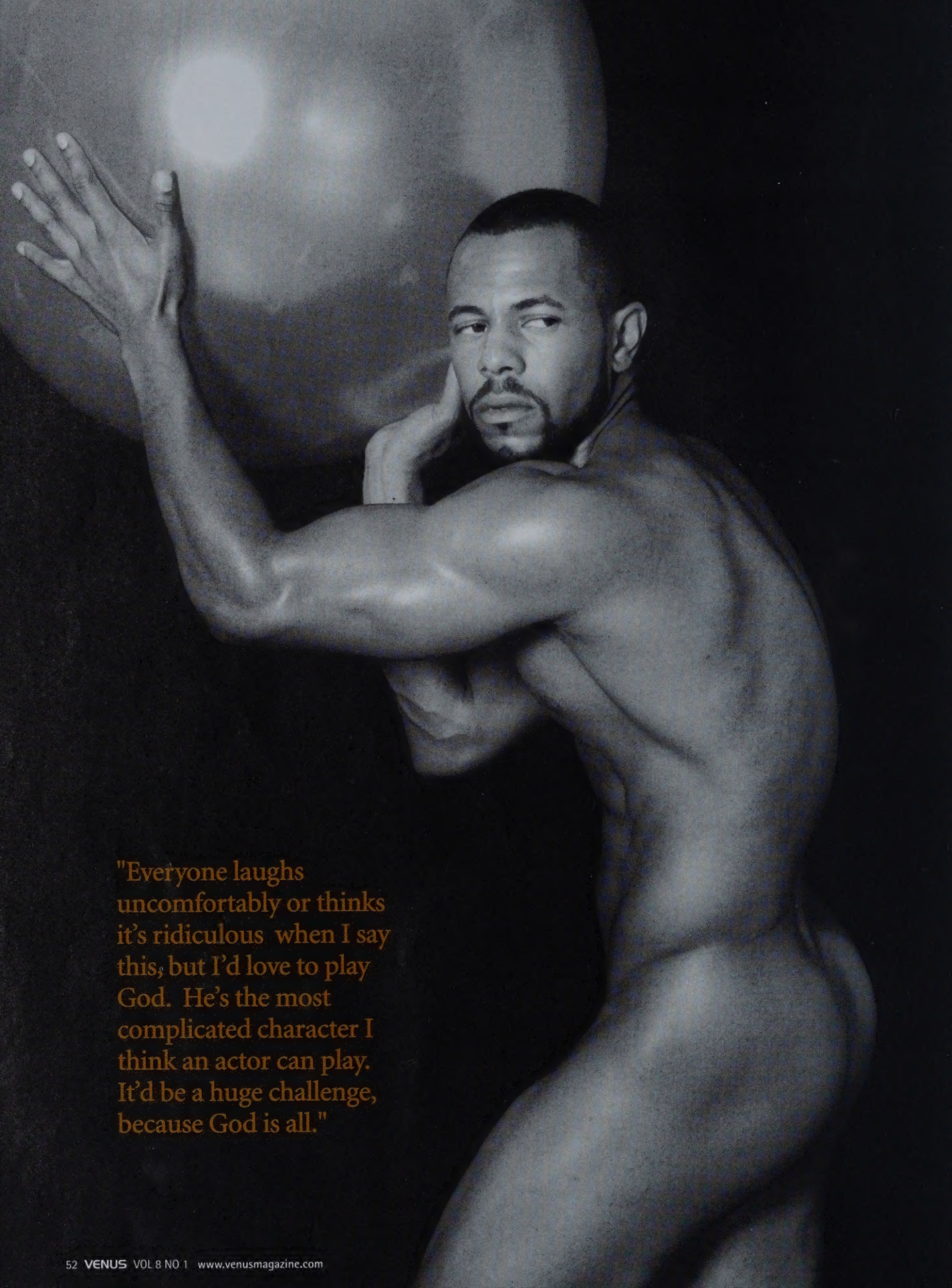
The son of an RN and a father who "has many jobs and hobbies," Dunbar was raised in Oakland, Calif. It was there, in high school, that he first remembers getting interested in acting. "I had the chance to take yet another gym class, or try something else. I decided I was tired of gym and took a drama class instead. That season there were a couple of productions going up. One was on Langston Hughes. I played like five roles." He laughs. "I remember changing costumes like crazy."

In spite of feeling the magic of being on stage, Dunbar went on to Morehouse College, a historically black college in Atlanta, with the dream of becoming a lawyer. One day, while bragging about a play he was in and how many "cats" he beat out to get the role, a friend asked him what turned out to be a critical question: Was it acting like a lawyer or was it the lawyering itself that Dunbar liked? Dunbar recalls this moment with a look of wonder on his face. "It was a question that made me change my major," he says. "I realized then that it really wasn't the career of a lawyer I wanted, it was the fantasy of the career, and the portrayal of it, the performance."

The rest is, well, history. Dunbar called his mother and told her he was changing his major to drama and that he wanted to be an actor, not a lawyer or corporate executive. She expressed surprise, but then he asked her what she thought the first time she ever saw him on stage. Without hesitation, she responded that she thought her son was exactly where he should be. Neither Hollywood, nor Dunbar's fans, could agree more.

Since then, in addition to his regular role on *Soul Food*, Dunbar's been a guest star on *Felicity*, *G. vs. E.*, *Two Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place*, *The Practice*, *The Pretender* and Spielberg's *Earth 2*. In addition, Dunbar has performed lead roles in an impressive list of independent features, among them the critically acclaimed *PUNKS*, *Sick Puppies*, *Love the Way*, *Misery Loves Company* and *Whodunit*. And this doesn't include his numerous stage productions. Dunbar has performed in several around the country. When I ask what his dream role is, Dunbar is quick to respond: "Everyone laughs uncomfortably or thinks it's ridiculous when I say this, but I'd love to play God. He's the most complicated character I think an actor can play. It'd be a huge challenge, because God is all." He also expressed interest in playing Arthur Ashe, the great African-American tennis player and role model who died of AIDS in 1993.





"Everyone laughs uncomfortably or thinks it's ridiculous when I say this, but I'd love to play God. He's the most complicated character I think an actor can play. It'd be a huge challenge, because God is all."

But acting is merely one of the very hot irons Dunbar's got in the fire. He plans to co-direct his first feature film, entitled *The Voices of Claire's Heart* in the near future. He's also working with E. Lynn Harris to develop a project. This would appear to be a match made in heaven.

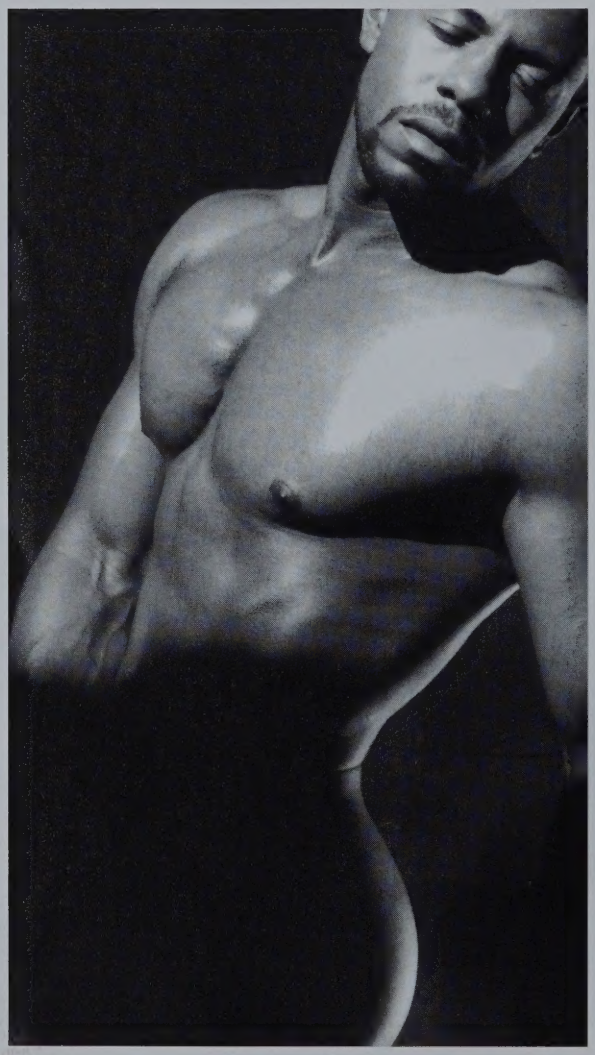
With a slew of novels, *Just As I Am* and *If This World Were Mine* among them, in which young, attractive, gay, straight and bisexual African-American men and women struggle to make it both personally and professionally, Harris has made a fortune appealing to both gay and straight, white and African-American readers. Like Harris, Dunbar, with his laid-back, everyman appeal (and, let's admit it, his chiseled physique) and his willingness to portray both gay and straight characters, has appealed to a similarly diverse audience. Clearly both Harris and Dunbar are, among other things, shrewd businessmen.

Reaching this relatively untapped audience with their projects will undoubtedly continue to put both author and actor on the cutting edge creatively, and be extremely lucrative to boot.

As if being an actor-director and collaborating with famous writers isn't enough, when I visit Dunbar's Web site (www.rockmonddunbar.com), I discover that he's an accomplished visual artist as well. With titles like "Mindseye," "Relationship's Nightmare," and "Baby's Beat," his paintings are haunting, and suggest that life is far from simple for this ambitious 28-year-old. When I compliment his work, Dunbar is modest.

"Painting is really like therapy," he says. "It's another way for me to express myself."

Of all the things he's got going on these days, though, Dunbar's calendar and his new clothing line are the two projects he expresses the most enthusiasm about. The 13-month calendar features photographs of Dunbar (and yes, he's scantily clad) by Michael Chambers, and Dunbar's own poetry. While he didn't want to give too much away about his new clothing line (called Rabnud, Dunbar's name spelled backward and with a silent "n"), Dunbar feels he and his designer have created a look that will appeal to both men and women.

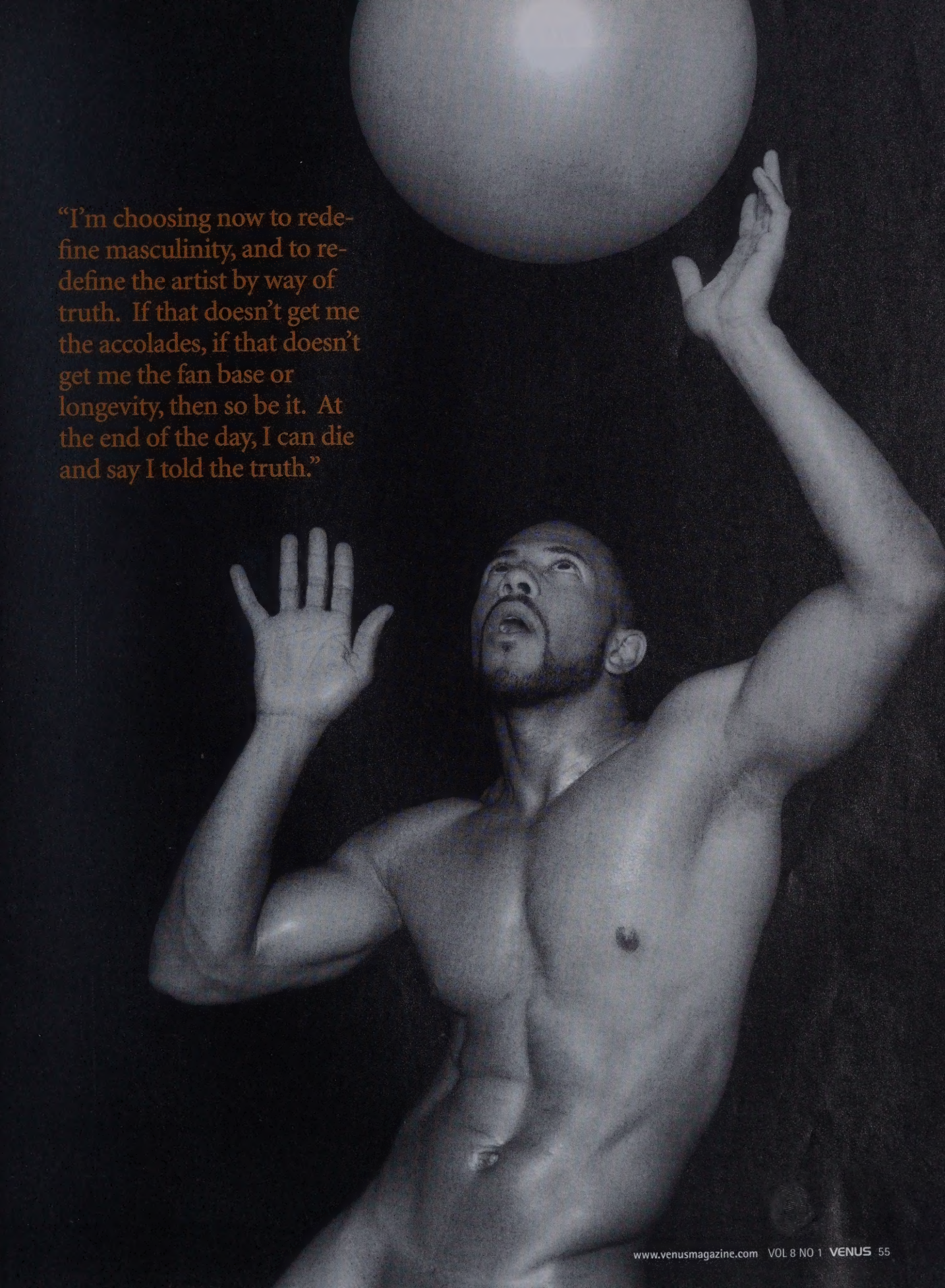


So how does Mr. Man in the mix hold it all together? Dunbar's commitment to working on himself certainly helps. When I ask about favorite authors, he offers a surprisingly honest answer: "Lately I've been reading psychology books, you know, self-help books. I'm trying to be a better person, a better lover, a better friend, a better boyfriend, a better son. I'm redefining Rockmond." He also has a larger agenda: "I'm choosing now to redefine masculinity, and to redefine the artist by way of truth. If that doesn't get me the accolades, if that doesn't get me the fan base or longevity, then so be it. At the end of the day, I can die and say I told the truth."

Self-discovery's all well and good, but to many, Dunbar's an enigmatic sex symbol, one folks want the low-down on, specifically where his sex life is concerned. Is he gay? Straight? Bi? Dunbar is straight, but judging from his ear-to-ear grin, he's got no problem being a gay icon: "This reporter told me after *PUNKS* was released that I was a gay icon. I absolutely love it. No complaints. I love that people appreciate my work. I love to be loved."

Bottom line? Dunbar's deeply committed to acting, and he's interested in taking on challenging roles regardless of the character's gender preference, and regardless of how people view him: "I don't ever feel like I have to prove myself. I don't have to wear an "I'm not gay" or "I'm gay" or "I'm bisexual" or "I'm not bisexual" T-shirt. He pauses a minute, then adds this: "The funniest thing is, that even if I answer the question, people don't believe it anyway, so it really doesn't matter."

What does matter is this: Dunbar's a multi-talented man who's working all he's got to the hilt, and it's just the beginning for this introspective rising star.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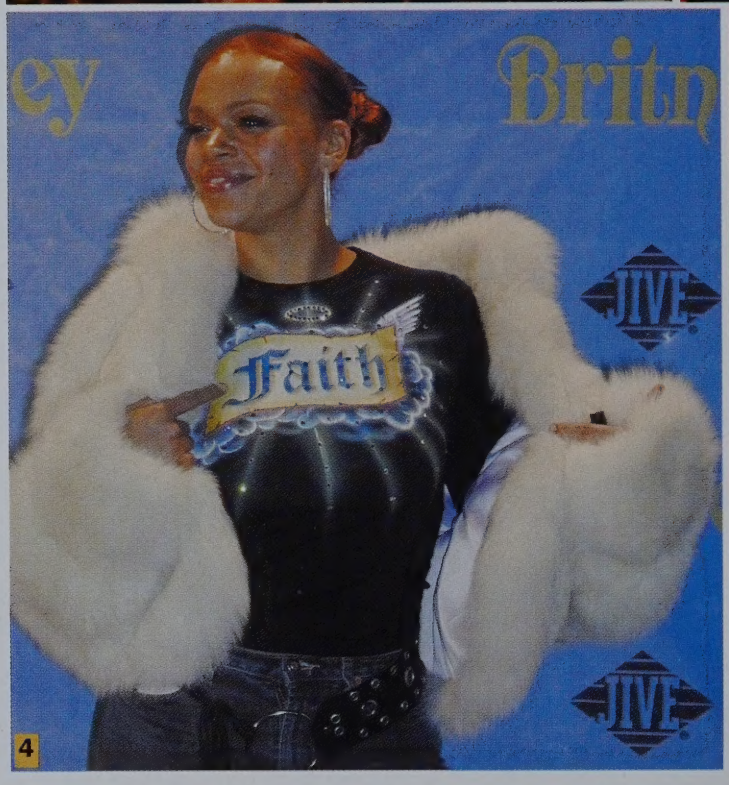

Photography by Tina Paul
1. Blu Cantrell, 2. Chaka Khan and 3. Mya deliver those miraculous smiles at WKTU's Miracle on 34th Street holiday concert, Madison Square Garden 4. Faith Evans representing at Britney Spear's Album party.

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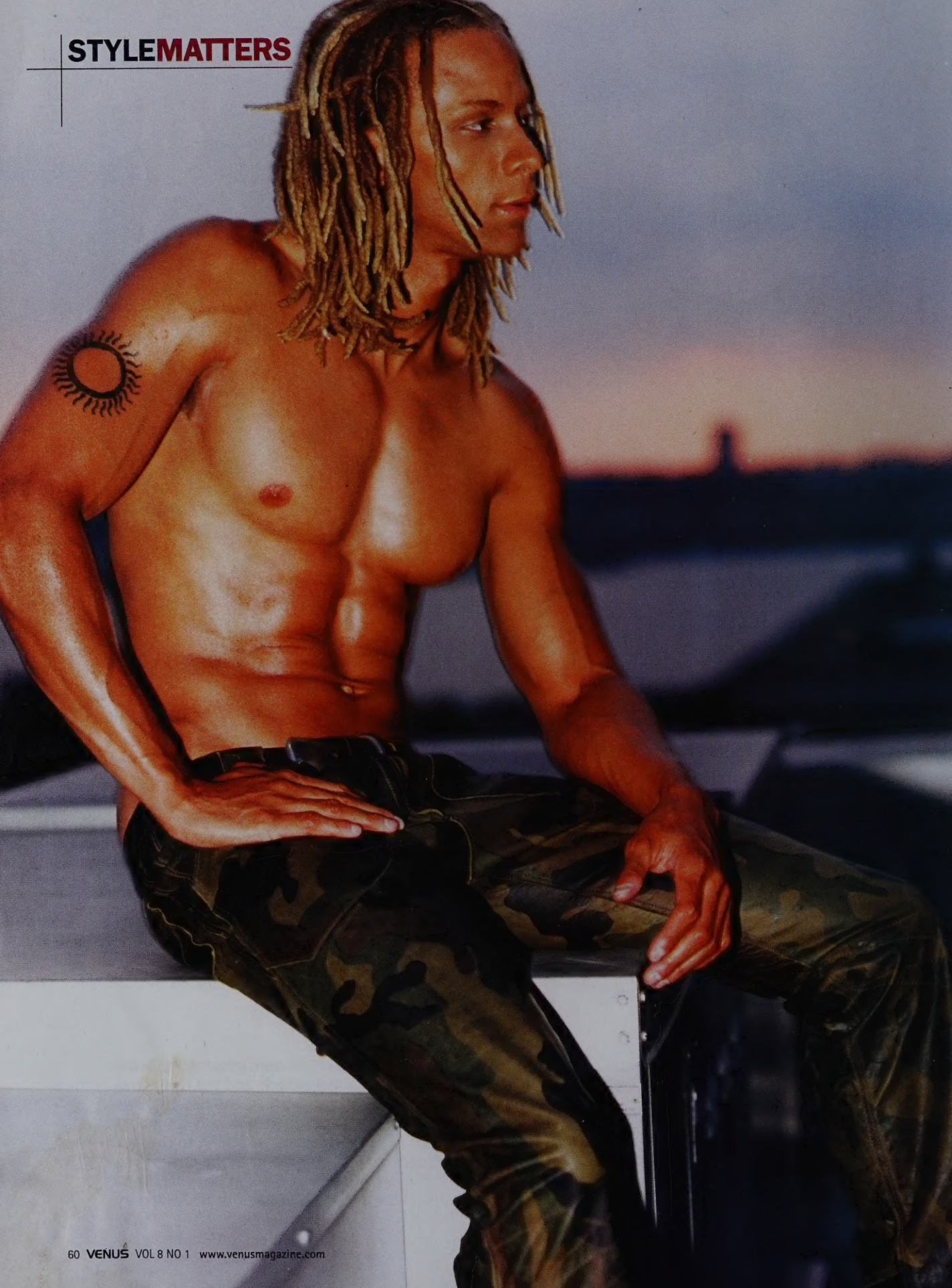
SKIN IS IN

words by Prince-Leon Kusi
images by Stanley Debas

Luscious, Luxurious Leather

Fashion Notes from the Diary of a Prince

The latest shapes by Anton at Siren on St. Mark's Place in New York were intoxicating, what with the laid-back format, the up-close-and-personal gorgeous models and the house music spinning all night. For a moment, I nearly forgot that I was working and had to be reminded to put pen to paper. You'll note that your Stylephile reporter is only a modest drinker, so it wasn't inebriation that I was feeling. No, no, this joy had everything to do with skin. When I received the invitation, I couldn't wait to get my happy self over to the club to see what new creations he had in store. Having dressed countless celebs, Anton has long been recognized as the master of leatherwear, and on this night, I got just a peek at his visionary brilliance.



and assorted alt-models. But where is the show, I wondered. Little did I know that this was the show. In a move characteristic of so many young talents, Anton had thumbed his nose at "traditional" shows and opted to give we, the people, a chance to experience the clothes, to get close enough to see the seams, and if you were lucky, you might just end up in a fashion spread. Sadly I was not so fortunate. But no matter, I was there for the garments!

There is no word in either my first, second or third language to describe the level of genius that this man possesses. Between Midori Sours, I glimpsed an array of earth-tone pants that hugged in all the right places. Essentially, birthday suit replicas, these were much more beautiful and sexy than any I've ever seen. Working in a myriad of skins ranging from ostrich to alligator and deer, he outfitted his multi-colored mannequins in iridescent halter tops with long wrap skirts and perfectly tailored suede demi-jackets were paired with mustard-tone Python pants. On my way to the bar, I passed a millennium warrior in a vest of red gator-skin armor. Never before has leather been so versatile, so stunningly beautiful. And the fact that each piece is reversible exponentially increases its beauty.

This is most certainly not your father's leather, nor is this road-ready Harley-inspired leather. Through some magical alchemy, Anton has honed the ability to make leather anything he wants it to be. On a whim it can be hard and rugged, then soft and supple, then feminine and flirty, then pure Rock 'n' Roll.

nly Anton could make leather ensembles suitable to be worn to

work, or the beach. Yes, he does swimwear! The irony of his all-couture clothes is that, much like their maker, they manage to be badass without being pretentious. There's no need to boast when you're the best.

Not merely a designer, Anton is an artisan, a craftsman par excellence. His "Predator and Prey" pants, made of alligator and deerskins, are representative of his superior craftsmanship. He creates animal skin mosaics that accentuate the human form. Whether it be a pair of men's pants or a woman's jacket, each article is meticulously crafted with enormous care. His cuts are unparalleled, his talents undeniable and his ascent into the fashion stratosphere inevitable.

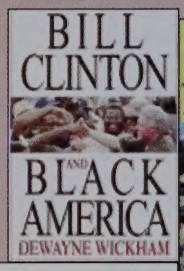
Having seen the artistry up close, I know he's sure to have

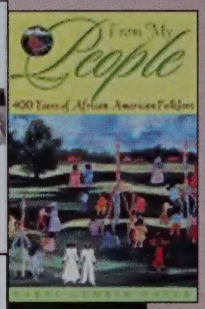
image by Milea
styling by Christian Ruart
for RC Productions.

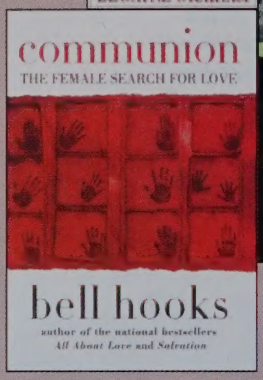
a backlog of orders. I'm going to place mine fast and once again join the partygoers feigning obliviousness to the fabulosity of their clothes and mocking the sorry souls who buy off the rack.

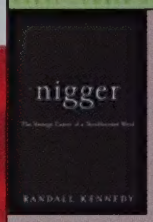
If you are looking for perfect ways to show your love, whether it's a love for your people, a beloved or a just a good read, here's a list that offers extraordinary ways.
Retha Powers is an Executive Editor of the Quality Paperback Book Club.

bell hooks challenges women's understanding of love in **Communion: The Female Search for Love.** hooks argues that contrary to images on TV, film and literature which are based on a patriarchal ideology, true love can only be found through love of oneself first. From here the search for true intimacy can begin. A chapter on lesbian relationships explores that challenges women loving women face.









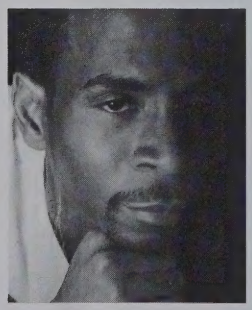
At over 700 pages, **For My People: 400 Years of African American Folklore** is an amazing collection of the ways we pass down our story from generation to generation. From speeches by Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth and Malcolm X to blues song lyrics of Ma Rainey and B.B. King to poetry and the humor of emails like "You Know You Went to a Black College If.." Daryl Cumber Dance captures the story of who we were, who we are and who we hope to be in our own words.

We've all heard that love is the other side of hate. No word inspires more extreme and complex feelings in black folks than the word **nigger.** Randall Kennedy looks at the history of this charged word from the first time it appeared in print in relation to a hate crime, to attempts to deactivate it's painful impact by today's rappers and other performers, and white folks who are sued for use present day.

Black Gay Man by Robert Reid-Pharr takes a look at what this complex identity through the lens of the personal, historical, the academic and the erotic. Topics such as The Million Man March, the black family gay male identity and lesbianism are a few of the topics Reid-Pharr lays bare in this important book.

Dark Midnight When I Rise: The Story of the Fisk Jubilee Singers tells the story of the singing group that was front page news in the 1870s. Dark Midnight tells the story of the singers success in spite of resistance from the dominant culture and also offers a complete portrait of the African-American struggle for education and an intellectual life under the most dire of circumstances.

Through step-by-step instructions and illustrations, **The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Dating and Sex** by Joshua Piven, David Borgenicth, Jenifer Worick shows you how to: remove stubborn articles of clothing, slip away from a blind date, how to escape a bad kisser and of survive a meeting with the parents, running into your ex or waking up next to someone whose name you can't remember.



Lyric: Poems Along A Broken Road
by G. Winston James ISBN: 0-9655117-1-5

The paperback release of Lyric: by G. Winston James, Executive Director of Other Countries: Black Gay Expression artists collective in New York, offers a metered and poetic blessing. James was a 1997 Fellow of the Millay Colony for the Arts, which gave him a room of his own to complete many of the works in this collection. He has collaborated with choreographers L.A.E. Beckles, Ronald K. Brown, Tamieca McCloud, Trebien Pollard, and André Tyson to create works fusing dance and the spoken word. His prose and essays are featured in several anthologies including Shade: An Anthology of Short Fiction by Gay Men of African Descent (Avon Books).

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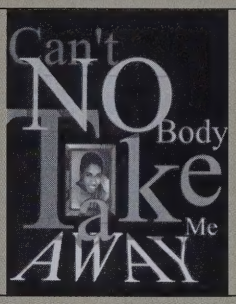
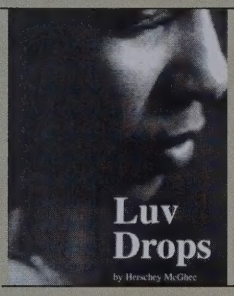


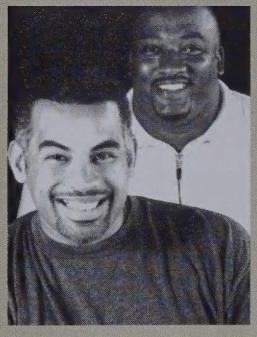


Luv Drops

by Herschey MgGhee
PO Box 20577, Park West Station, New York, NY, 10025
A new collection of poems from multi-award-winner Herschey MgGhee, elicits joy and pain with passionate and humorous prose.

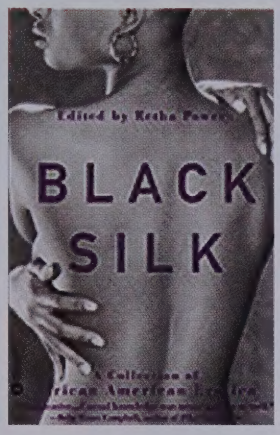
Visiting Langston

by Willie Perdomo and Bryan Collier ISBN:0-8050-6744-2
A unique journey into the immortal poet's world through the eyes of a little girl visiting his Harlem home is the picture book Visiting Langston. Written by cutting-edge poet Willie Perdomo (who grew up near Hughes' Harlem house) and illustrated by Bryan Collier (who won a Coretta Scott-King Award).



BLACK SILK

Edited by
Retha Powers
Warner Books
ISBN:
0446676918



A powerful collection of erotica from today's leading black writers and fresh voices, BLACK SILK explores exciting territory in the realm of the African-American experience. From Eric Jerome Dickey's rueful tale of lust to Lolita Files's scorching account of insatiable adventuring...to Breena Clarke's tribute to the strength of erotic imagination...to Camika Spencer's encounters online and in the flesh...to Carolyn Ferrell's story of intergenerational desire and discovery, this book sings of the power of the forbidden and the transforming-with unforgettable characters who claim their pleasure and seek its ultimate limits. Never before published, never before available, these erotic short stories are a dazzlingly sensual meditation on the very soul of passion. Acclaimed LGBT voices include: Jacqueline Woodson, Bruce Morrow, Janet McDonald, Bil Wright and Elissa Perry.

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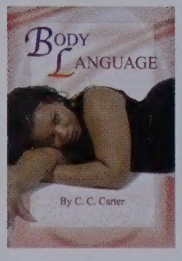
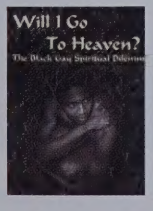


"A celebration of the physical nature of language, the poems in "Body Language" bend to the heat of C.C.'s voice, wrap themselves into verses, stanzas, songs of desire and self-love that make you want to shout 'yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!' "
-Cin Salach, Art Beat Chicago

Will I Go To Heaven ?

The Black Gay Spiritual Dilemma
by Tuan N'Gai
Biazo Ministries
ISBN: 0-9710313-0-4,



For those struggling with their spiritual connection and the assurance for a glorious afterlife, N'Gai's ministry offers deliverance from fear and rejection. He is co-founder and assistant pastor of Living Faith Church of the Full Covenant in Dallas. For orders email, BiazoMinistries@aol.com.

Bestselling Author Penny Micklebury Starts her Own Publishing House by Stanley Bennet Clay

Agatha Christie, eat your heart out. Not only has best-selling author Penny Mickelbury just published Love Notes, the brand new installment of her successful literary lesbian crime-fighting duo, Gianna Maglione and Mimi Patterson, but she has also done it under her own publishing company, Migi Books. Says the former Washington Post reporter: "Publishing one's own work is a way of regaining control of one's own life and destiny...not leaving crucial decisions in the hands of other people, particularly white people." Along with her life and business partner, Peggy Blow, Micklebury started Migi Books, making her a part of the tiny minority in the publishing world that own their own company.

lady sings the blues

review by Rod Montero

She has been called a master of the Blues. Her music has been described as sultry, bawdy, sexy, soulful, and bluesy, all fitting words to describe powerhouse songstress Gwen Avery, whose new CD, *Sugar Mama*, is a collection of her best songs.

Her success is really no surprise, since music was in her blood. Growing up in a speakeasy, she spent her youth glued to the jukebox. She credits the speakeasy's diverse clientele for teaching her about music, poetry, and Blues, as well as her Irish-barbershop singing uncles. "The Irish and the black people were culturally alike in many ways because they were poor and they were working families," she said.

But her mentor was Herman Heddon, who not only nurtured her musical gifts but, as a gay man (the first she had ever met), also influenced her coming out as a lesbian at age 12. She made up her mind that she would be her own person and never let anyone tell her what to do. Gwen said that her raw ambition and iron will came from the feeling that women and girls weren't safe. "That's how you survive, you'd have to have this crust...and you never break, no matter what."

She did not just survive, she thrived. For three years in the early 1970s, she sang in Gregg Young's band, Full Moon. She sang on the Varied Voices of Black Women with Linda Tillery, Vicky Randle, and Mary Watkins. She also did *Any Woman's Blues*, which was sent along with books and other items to women's prison, "so they could do something besides sit in jail," Gwen said.

Sugar Mama is a testament to her far-reaching career, combining all the influences and experiences that reflect her deep understanding and beautifully conveys what Blues is really about.

fine art

Fine Art, a quartet of women of color, is a dazzling R&B group increasingly drawing acclaim. Their soulful harmonies, covers of today's hits and songs of spirituality have wowed listeners at Brooklyn Pride, the Brooklyn boutique Moshood's annual ball and the Bronx Museum, just to name a few.

Its members are Lorna Jones, who founded the band back in 1994 and worked with Kenny Rodgers and Keith Sweat's band; Yvette Thomas, an HIV counselor; Gina L. Green, a writer and a single mother, and Patricia Smith-Campbell, who exchanged vows with her life partner on Fire Island in 1996. Be on the lookout for these talented, courageous sisters as their message and music spreads throughout our nation and America's mainstream.

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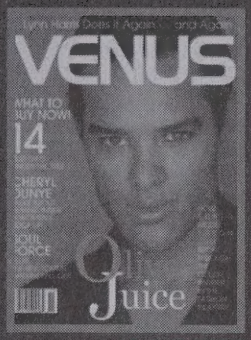

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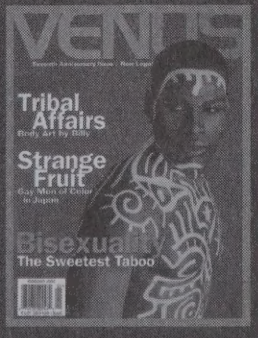

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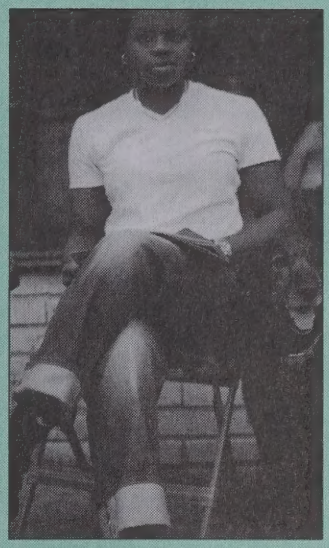

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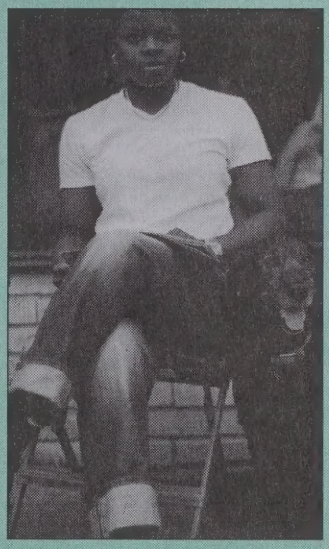

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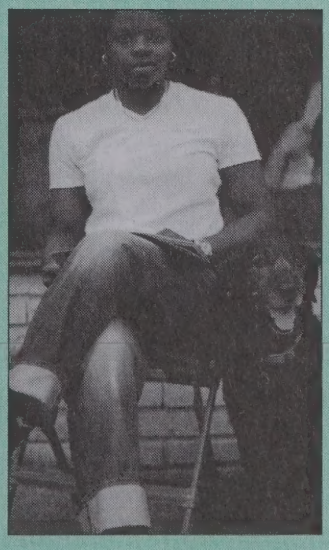

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stone cold Angie

words by Michael K. Watts

"I want all of my strong Black brothas to put their hands up... Homos, put your hands down!"

On her sophomore album *Mahogany Soul* (J Records), soul siren Angie Stone took a bold step in releasing as the first single "Brotha," a high-powered, urban anthem heralding the strength and honor of Black men. She fearlessly risked rejection from mainstream audiences to motivate Black men and put an end to "brotha-hating." But some of Stone's fans believe her empowering words of praise only apply to straight Black men.

On August 18 of last year, Stone, 37, performed at the South Ward African-American Street Festival in Newark, NJ and allegedly made offensive statements toward gay Black men. Stanley L. Crawford, a gay Black man who attended the show, says Stone introduced her performance of "Brotha" by saying, "I want all of my strong Black brothas to put their hands up... Homos, put your hands down!"

Crawford says mouths dropped as the 400-plus crowd looked on in silent shock. Crawford kept his hand in the air and came anxiously close to walking out on the show. "I was really shocked that she would say something like that," he lamented, "I felt like somebody had slapped me across my face."

Stone claims that she does not remember the show but adamantly denies making the statements, stressing that "Brotha" applies to all Black men. "I'm like, if you're gay, stand up. If you're a strong brotha and you're gay—it doesn't matter to me. Stand to your feet," Stone said, "I really think there is just someone hating, player-hating."

"Rhonda," a straight Black woman who prefers to remain anonymous, also attended the show and was taken aback by Stone's alleged insults. "I was very disappointed by [her statements], actually, because I like her as an artist," Rhonda admitted. "To make a song like that in support of Black men and then to negate that—I didn't understand that. We're all one family."

Don Johnson, co-owner of Black Explosion Getaways, was planning to hire Stone to perform at Winter Explosion 2002, an annual black gay and lesbian ski weekend held each February. Johnson heard about the incident and reacted immediately by calling off negotiations with booking agent Brian Dickens of B D Management, who had been dealing with Stone and her management staff on Johnson's behalf. "We will not book an artist who [publicly] speaks anti-gay rhetoric," Johnson firmly stated. Johnson ultimately secured R&B soulter Ann Nesby for the event instead.

Stone maintains she knew nothing of the pending booking and never heard of Winter Explosion 2002. In the past Dickens has booked Stone for numerous shows, some with gay and lesbian audiences, and this show would have been no different. "There never was any conversation or concerns about performing for a predominantly gay-oriented event. She's done it before," Dickens said, "She's not a homophobic individual."

Ann Nesby

"My last record dealt with life, love and relationships," she says, "and we got such a good response that I wanted to continue with those themes."

Hers is a voice that will stop you in your tracks. The sheer emotional intensity demands your attention. It's hard not to wax lyrical or use superlatives when describing Ann Nesby's heart-filled, God-given gift. In the oft-times 'here today, gone tomorrow' music biz, she's the real thing, the epitome of true soul-to-the-bone singing. You can hear it from the very first notes of "Seasons," the opening track all the way to the final few bars of "You Always Cared," the last song on Ann's superb sophomore solo album, "Put It On Paper" on *Its Time Child Records.*

"I was in Philadelphia and [Rev. Al Green] flew in to record it and it was amazing. I mean, historic! Gamble & Huff stopped by during the session and it was just magical."

PUT IT ON PAPER

THE PRINCESS OF SOUL TAPS AL GREEN FOR A DUET ON HER LATEST PROJECT.

Musical diversity is the key component on the album using her dynamic vocal skills, Ann moves seamlessly from traditional R&B and pop to sizzling dance music, infusing each track with her distinctive, gospel-honed brand of vocal artistry.

Going beyond her sterling work with the award-winning Sounds of Blackness and her much-acclaimed 1996 solo debut *I'm Here For You*, the multi-talented singer, songwriter and producer is in her prime with her latest project. With typical modesty, Ann declares, "I wanted to make an album you could put on from beginning to end without skipping a song, a record that has a musical flow to it." Working with producers Herb Middleton, Gerald Isaac, Brian Alexander Morgan, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, John Forbes & Douglas Grigsby, Mousse T and Steve 'Silk' Hurley, Ann has crafted a record filled with standouts and future classics.

"Put it On Paper," an unforgettable duet with the legendary Al Green, recorded at the famed Gamble & Huff-owned Philadelphia International Records studio is a case in point. "We caught up with the Reverend Green when he was on tour and we had sent him a tape of the song," she recalls. "I was in Philadelphia and he flew in to record it and it was amazing. I mean, historic! Gamble & Huff stopped by during the session and it was just magical."

It goes without saying that the album includes several enduring, truth-telling ballads such as "I Can't Get Over You" and "I'm Your Friend" (a duet with producer/keyboardist and artist in his own right Big Jim Wright with The Sounds of Blackness on background vocals). Then there's "Advice"- one of the nine songs Ann co-wrote for the album – a brilliant true-to-life opus that features Ann's talented daughter Jamecia Bennett. "My last record dealt with life, love and relationships," she says, "and we got such a good response that I wanted to continue with those themes."

While Ann's pre-eminence as a balladeer of the first order is evident throughout "Put It On Paper" she shows her appreciation to the loyal following she's created over the years in the dance music community (through her own "Hold On," "Can I Get A Witness" and Sounds of Blackness classics "Optimistic" and "The Pressure") with some truly passion-filled rhythmic grooves. A brilliant cover of "Lovin' is Really My Game," originally recorded by Brainstorm in 1977 and later reprised by both the late Sylvester and Betty Wright is an obvious dance floor smash; while "Let Your Will Be Done" is a joyous gospel workout. "I figured we could do something for the dance and gospel audiences with that tune and working with (Chicago house music legend) Steve 'Silk' Hurley was wonderful," she says.

Music for the Soul

We want people to have a good time but we also hope they'll come away thinking about making a better world," says entertainer Jenny Burton of her show The Jenny Burton Experience. *Backstage* said, "It is difficult to convey in words the extraordinary feeling of exhilaration one feels seeing the Jenny Burton Experience."

Jenny Burton's extraordinary career has taken her around the globe, from New York City's Lincoln Center, Copacabana, Paris Garage and Plaza Hotel to the Cannes Film Festival. She has also sung in Jamaica, Berlin, Paris, and a live performance for 260,000 people at the Washington Monument in the nation's capital. She has appeared with Harry Belafonte in the movie *Beat Street,* and has recorded several hit songs such as "One More Shot," "I Remember What You Like," and "I Got a Bad Habit." Burton's show, The Jenny Burton Experience ran for seven years of sold out performances at New York's "Don't Tell Mama."

Hush! Somebody's Calling My Name

Serving as a musical tribute to the ancestors who suffered and perished in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, *Triumph of the Human Spirit* gushes with stimulating music, spoken word and the soothing yet haunting sounds of the ocean.

Standard spirituals and gospel hymns that have been sung for generations form the bulk of this project. A rendition of "Amazing Grace" summarizes the faith and determination of the children of the Diaspora.

"Lord, How Come Me Here" gives a voice to the despair of those who have tread before us. An upbeat arrangement of "Hush (Somebody's Calling My Name)" shines, and a soul-stirring rendition of "God Is" exemplifies African-American's centuries long dialogue with the Creator.

Woven throughout the work are poetry and quotes exploring the experiences of those victimized by slavery. An original composition entitled "Jackie's Jazz" portrays how the usually beautiful characteristics of womanhood vanish when crammed in the belly of slave ships.

Africans and Americans recorded the powerful "Chamber of Prayers" in a West African cell where slaves had once been held. The artistic accompanying journal *Triumph of the Human Spirit,* includes a historical overview and thought-provoking questions, appropriate for self-exploration or classroom discussion. *Triumph of the Human Spirit* washes with ethereal music and thoughtful words that remind us of the great tragedy that we must never forget. For more information or to order the CD log onto www.triumphofthehumanspirit.com

sitcom

Lunden De'Leon Stars as First African-American Lead on INTERNET TV Show

"It sends a positive image regarding the world of Black executives in Hollywood."

For the last few years there has been great debate about the lack of black faces on network sitcoms. But now renowned actress-comedienne Lunden De'Leon is set to star in a brand-new sitcom to be aired this year entitled simply *Sitcom*. But this will not be just any new sitcom; it will break ground as the first-ever situation comedy show airing solely on the Internet. Sitcom is the creation of the Television Internet Broadcasting Network, an innovator and pioneer in Internet series programming, and will be airing this winter on www.televisiononinternet.com.

"*Sitcom* could easily finish in the top ten of any network this season," says the veteran performer who will be making Internet history. De'Leon's career has spanned every part of the art spectrum. She has appeared in over 50 movies and television show and has graced the pages of *Swimsuit Illustrated*. "As a black woman, I am very proud that *Sitcom* shows that African American women can be funny, beautiful, and intelligent," she says about her show.

In the pilot episode, De'Leon played one of the fictitious heads of Television Internet, which has just completed a hit series called *Muscle Beach*. Riding high on its success, the network then decides to give the OK for *Muscle Beach* producer Justin Chase (played by Allen Burns) and his marketing and promotions head Brandy Dubuffet (De'Leon's character) to produce the next series for the network.

De'Leon explains that having an African-American woman as one of the fictional network heads was important to the production of the show. "It sends a positive image regarding the world of Black executives in Hollywood," De'Leon explains. *Sitcom* promises to be a hilarious, innovative new show everyone can enjoy and on many different levels.

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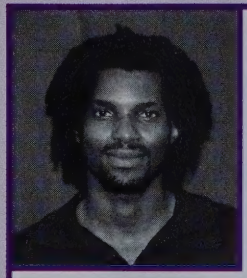

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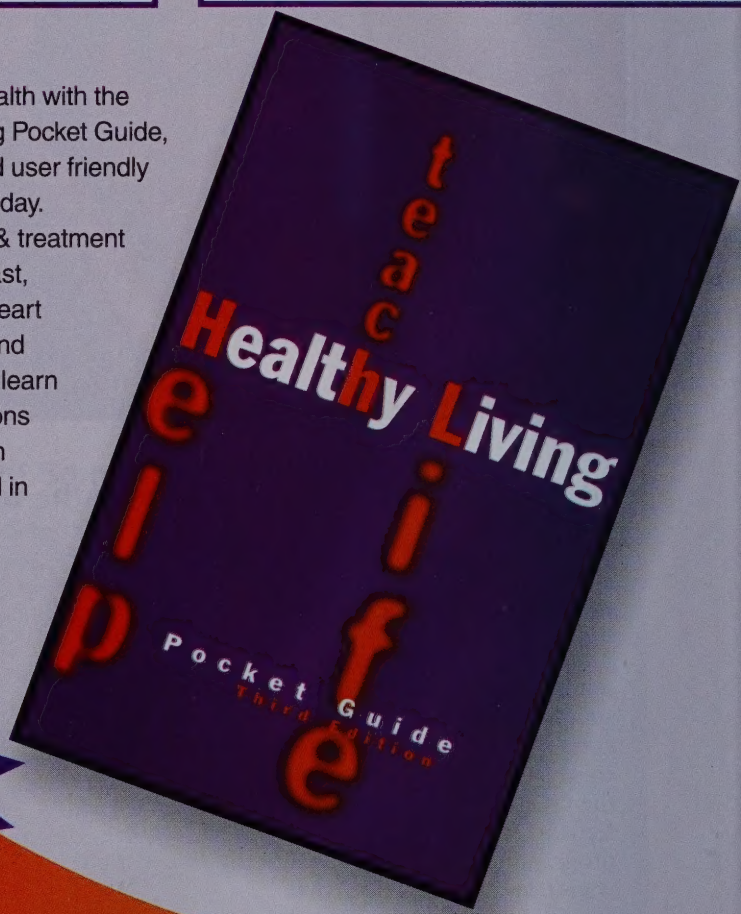

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i'll fly away

review by Phil Petrie

The Execution of Wanda Jean

HBO airs documetary of her last days on death row.

"Was Wanda Jean Allen a victim, too? In my opinion, the film won't change any minds on that score."

The nation has grappled with the efficacy of capital punishment since its resurrection in 1976. Some groups argue that on its face the death penalty is "cruel and unusual punishment." Others argue that capital punishment is a deterrent to violent crimes, observing that the punishment at least deters the recipient of the death penalty from killing anyone else. Yet another faction believes that the death penalty is unfair in that it disproportionately affects the poor and minorities.

According to Bryan Stevenson, executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Ala., "In some Southern states, two-thirds of those executed have been black. Some 75 percent juvenile offenders executed in the U. S. have been people of color . . . Of the nine teenage girls executed in United States history, eight were African American and one Native American."

As one cynic put it, "In America capital punishment means them without the capital get the punishment."

This came to mind as we watched Liz Garbus's documentary film, The Execution of Wanda Jean. Garbus, who received an Academy-Award nomination for her film, The Farm: Angola USA, in this new film follows the life of Wanda Jean Allen, a young black woman given the death penalty for murdering her lover. Venus was especially interested in the story since it involved two black lesbians, one of whom murdered the other. Long-time Venus readers will remember that this magazine was named for Venus Landin [1961-1993] who was murdered by an ex-lover in Atlanta, Georgia. Having killed the object of her affection, or control ["If I can't have you, no one will."], Landin's former lover shot and killed herself.

Be forewarned, this film really isn't about a lesbian lifestyle. It chronicles the efforts to save Wanda Jean Allen from execution. The filmmaker believes it to be an "unflinching investigation of the role poverty, mental health, race, and sexuality play within the criminal justice system."

Wanda Jean Allen was sentenced to death in 1989 for shooting to death her lover, Gloria Leathers, outside an Oklahoma City police station and in front of Leather's mother. The film finds Wanda Jean Allen 11 years later, her execution date just months away.

The film follows Allen's attorneys, interviews her family, as well as the victim's family members. Here's

Continued on page 87

Who Loves the Man in the Dress?

words by G.B. Mann
image by Kairo Allen

"By the way," he begins, "You know I realize that I'm not a woman, right?"

A pretty black girl clad in tight jeans, knit top and the strap of an oversized designer bag dug gently into the flesh of her shoulder as she balanced the weight with the force of the stopping and starting public bus. As she tossed long, straight, shoulder-length hair flowing from under a skullcap, one could glimpse her full, natural lips, her darting eyes, peering out in anticipation of her impending stop. Her eyes looked directly into mine more than once, and after a particularly long stare, I realized that sistah-girl was, to use a term coined by Gregory Victorianne, a "brista."

A question popped into my head. "Who loves the man in the dress?" Pulling the cord, s/he signaled for the next stop. I got off behind her and pitched this article. She agreed on the condition of anonymity. We agreed to meet the next day in a neutral place. The AromaZone coffeehouse on L.A.'s Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue.

A brass bell tinkled, announcing "Lallah's" entrance into the coffeehouse. Her perfume preceded her. Dressed in flouncy fall fashions, s/he couldn't be read, could "pass," was not clock-able. Not clock-able, that is, to untrained eyes and gaydars calibrated at lower levels. Lallah's firm (and I do mean firm) handshake was, in my mind, incongruous to the manicured nails. S/he smiled and pulled out a chair, smoothing before sitting, the gray, wool, pleated skirt hovering above thick, black hose. We were now face to face across the donut-sized table. I couldn't get over how pretty s/he was. "So ladylike," I thought, trying to imagine dick under the frill. I inhale, trying to name-that-scent. "It's Joy." I guess I looked confused. "My perfume... It's called Joy."

Lallah started right in, saying that he likes to ride public buses dressed "femininely" because "no one can tell," adding that s/he would never dress on the bus as s/he is today because it would bring too much attention and scrutiny. "I mean, what woman gets on the bus looking this snatched?!" I have no answer. "That's why I do hoochie when I ride the bus." I confess that I was not the wiser until something in the eyes said man. "Men can be so dumb... I have to play a mute sometimes so that they don't find out," referring to the many times s/he has been approached by straight men who "don't have a clue." "There were a few times I felt that if I would've said something, I might not look as pretty as I do now." In those situations Lallah said that s/he avoided eye contact, and for those particularly aggressive, just nodded to everything they said. "Trust me, these men would not have been happy campers. I've run across those who didn't mind the big surprise, but there are those..." A side tilt of the head puts a period on the sentence.

Lallah has opened the door to my original query. "Who loves you?" I ask. "Who loves the man in the dress?" S/he demurs, and exposes a big smile, one eye-tooth slightly overlaps its neighbor. "By the way," s/he begins, "You know I realize that I'm not a woman, right?" I nod yes, even though I had never really

thought about it. "Of course." He searches a wallet as he talks. "Let's just say I gets mines." Lallah produces a photo from the wallet, and hands it over the table held between index and middle fingers like a trump card in Vegas. His hands freeze, gracefully over the table. "That's my baby." I look. Pictured is the kind of brother that makes sisters go "Mmph!" Fingers animate again, twinkling like confetti falling, a gesture for the return of the King of Hearts. A kiss before slipping it back into the wallet. She repeats as if to bookend. "That's my baby." I think to myself that I wouldn't necessarily put Lallah and the man in the photo together. Let's call him Tyrone.

Lallah and Tyrone met at a family barbecue. "Not everyone knew about him, but of course, they knew about me. Look at me. It's kind of hard NOT to know." Tyrone had just moved to LA from Mobile, Alabama, a friend of Lallah's straight, first cousin. With a laugh, Lallah recalls her cousin's introduction. "He said that Tyrone was gay, and looking for some gay friends, but not my kinda gay. I almost slapped him." After meeting him, Lallah says that he felt no attraction, not because he wasn't attractive, but "because guys like him weren't usually attracted to guys like me." Lallah describes the first impression of Tyrone with a cliche. "A Southern Gentleman." After a few telephone conversations and more than a few failed attempts to hook Ty up with straight-acting friends, he joked about the two of them dating. That ended the conversation abruptly with Ty remembering that he had to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro that night. After a few weeks he called back and asked Lallah out. Well, not out-out, but, over, for dinner. That's was the start of their dating.

At first, they only met in clandestine places. At his or Lallah's apartment for dinner, or parked in Griffith Park overlooking the city lights at night. Lallah nearly spits latte telling about the time he just "smiled real pretty" and let Tyrone do all the talking when park rangers beamed flashlights through their fogged up car windows. "For a long time I never saw him before sundown. I never said anything, but I know he felt it."

The first time they were seen in the daylight, in public together was at a West Hollywood Halloween fest. It was Tyrone's idea. Lallah was a bit offended at first. "I was hot. I asked him if he thought I was a freak!" After a few days of not speaking and "no nookie," Lallah realized that it was growth for their budding love affair. "It knew it wasn't easy for Ty, so I just decided to look at it as a big party for our first time in public together." When asked why West Hollywood, s/he bangs the table causing our drinks to nearly spill onto the table. "Because (excuse my French) those white boys over there don't give a fuck!" I press him further. "For instance, you can go there and see people together, I mean types you would never see together at a black club. Two guys considered fem by black standards can be kissing, huggin' and in love and nobody looks twice." He ends by sharing the story of a time that a friend of his was

"His hands freeze, gracefully over the table. "That's my baby." I look. Pictured is the kind of brother that makes sisters go "Mmph!" Fingers animate again, twinkling like confetti falling, a gesture for the return of the King of Hearts."

told that it wasn't "dyking season" when coupled with another "soft" man. Lallah waves a hand and declares it all stupid. Love is love. This macho, DL shit is outta control."

He reiterates that Ty wasn't looking for someone like him, but was open enough to give him a chance. He looks at his watch and announces that he has a nail appointment. "Can't keep Miss Thing waiting. I don't speak Korean, but I know that bitch be cussin' me out when I'm late." Before Lallah can fully rise from the table, I plead for one last question. About sex.

"Who's on top?" Lallah purses lips and bats lashes as only a drag queen can, and looks up at me through the brown eyes underneath their shade. Lallah laughs loud enough, and with enough bass, that people look up, look closer. They seem to be reevaluating gender now. Lallah stands, fingers waving again, as if to cast a spell. "Don't let the smooth taste fool you. . .clothes do not the man make... and to quote Saint RuPaul, 'It's all drag.'" With that, I stand with Lallah as she slings the designer bag over a shoulder, plants a kiss on my cheek, rubs it in, and is off, skirt flouncing again, perfume wafting again, competing for top-billing with the pungence of brewing coffee. The Java doesn't have a prayer. Joy wins, easily.

The brass bells tinkles again signally Lallah's exit. As he opens the door to exit, he extends a gold-bangled wrist back into the room and pops off a finger snap so loud and crisp that it rings in the ear like a firecracker. Everyone in the coffeehouse looks up as if released from trance. I hear Lallah's muffled giggle from the other side of the picture frame window. I stand, not looking at anyone, feeling their eyes on me. A dreadlocked and mudclothed sistah volunteers. "Well, at least she didn't overdo it. At least he/she represented a pretty black woman." Her words cull acceptance from everyone present. They all go back to their steaming cups and conversations.

G.B. Mann is publisher of the Grape Vine Press.

Grabbing the Third Rail

by Chuck Tarver

This is going to get me into trouble but it's time what I'm about to say was said. I'm reaching for the third rail! We could reduce the rate of new HIV infections in our community if we would reduce the rate of anal sex. There, I've said it!

Some will attack me as being sex negative. Others will call me a right wing religious fundamentalist, while still others will call me the black Larry Kramer. I'm none of those things. What I am is someone who is tired of not stating the obvious and in the meantime watching brothers (some of whom have been members of my own family) die. I'm tired of watching younger and younger brothers become infected.

It is clear to me that anal sex is dangerous. I don't need the Pope, Louis Farrahkan, or the local fire and brimstone preacher to tell me that. It is simple biology. Most of us now understand how this disease is transmitted.

Am I the only one who sees gay (men who have sex with men) culture as promoting penetrative anal sex? Does anyone else get it? Even the HIV/AIDS service organizations promote it! Their message that appears throughout the media is "Use a condom every time you have sex." For emphasis they repeat it, "Every time you have sex!"

What they are saying is that unless there is penetration it isn't sex. They have taken a page from our 42 President and defined what the meaning of "is" is. According to them sex is penetration. For gay men (men who have sex with men) it is anal penetration. Their safety option is a thin piece of latex. Little to no effort is directed toward encouraging safer erotic alternatives.

We clearly need to redefine the meaning of sex. We need a definition broad enough to include a wide range of behaviors including non penetrative acts such as frottage and masturbation. Acts that are proven to be safer than penetrative sex, even with condoms.

Yet, throughout our community it is believed that unless you are either penetrating or being penetrated, you are not having sex. Even young men, some of whom have little or no sexual experience hold that belief. They have already concluded that anal sex is simply a "fact" of gay life. They come by the belief honestly. It is the message transmitted by their gay and straight peers, their parents, HIV/AIDS service organizations, the porn industry and society in general. Everything tells them that anal sex is the "norm." They join in the practice without questioning. If condoms are handy, they may use them. If they are not, they don't.

At the same time, we have come to believe that these young black men are becoming infected because they lead secret lives. Article after article tells us, that if they would just declare themselves "proudly gay" all their problems would be solved and we could get a handle on the rate of new infections. We are told to look at how the "gay" community has dealt with the problem. We are led to believe that if they would just venture forth and "come out" from their secretive lives, all would be well. Yet, none of those challenging these young men to change their lives, will challenge a culture that promotes penetrative anal sex as the norm.

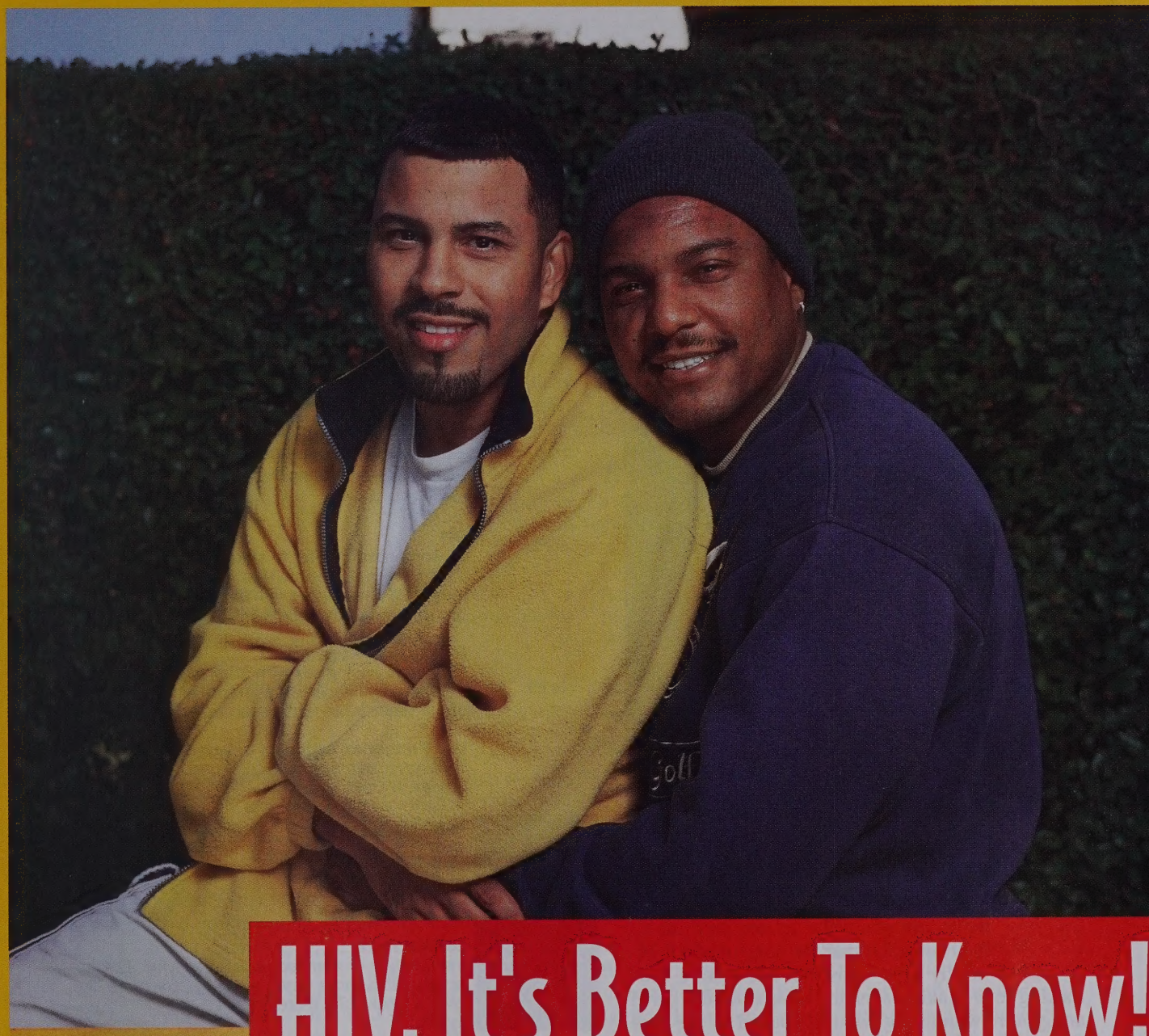
The secret lives of these young men, while problematic relating to issues of self worth and self esteem, is not what's causing the high rates of infection. Truth be told, they could continue their secretive lives if they changed from the high risk behavior that they have come to see as "what sex is all about." It's penetrative anal sex not their secrets that is infecting them. The very behavior that is promoted by the culture as the norm.

I am not calling for a ban on anal sex nor am I suggesting that HIV/AIDS service organizations stop the practice of condom distribution. I'm calling for open and frank discussion about what we find erotic. I'm calling for a change from a culture that promotes penetrative anal sex as the standard, to one that is open to a broad range of sexual behaviors and presents them all as equally "normal" in our sex lives.

We also need to discuss the dangers and pleasures of anal sex. Men who enjoy it will continue to practice it. It is important that they learn to do so safely.

We will never get control of the rising HIV infection rates among young black men without challenging our current culture. A culture that promotes penetrative anal sex as the standard.

Chuck Tarver is owner/editor of www.Blackstripe.com.



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CLOSER THAN CLOSE

Keeping Your Love Fires Buring

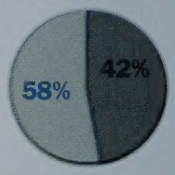
by Annette Segal
image by Ron Singleton

So you and your lover have been together a while and you wake up one morning to the realization that the honeymoon is officially over. Those hot and steamy, bed-rocking love-making sessions have slowed a clawl and you're wondering what happened to the passionate fires that consumed you both in the beginning. Or the bed is still rocking but with a different person every month or week because you get bored so easily. Is sexual boredom 'normal' or more difficult for gay couples to over come? First, realize that fire does fizzle. 'Bed Death' can strike most unexpectedly even the most loving couples. It's like scratching a place that doesn't itch any more.

On the one hand it is natural that couples might not be able to keep the fevered fires of the early passion going months later. And yet, gay and lesbian sexuality has such tremendous potential and variety that 'Bed Death' is in reality nothing but a myth. Long-term relationships between couples need not necessarily end up in boredom and there is no physiological reason for the same. [In fact, The 2002 Venus Black Gay Sex Survey shows that most black gay and lesbian couples are having enjoyable sex.]

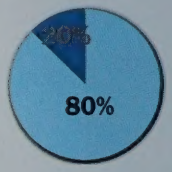
The Truth About Sex When You're Black and Gay! VenusOnline Sex Survey Results

Sistahs



Single?
42% surveyed, single women
58% women in relationships

Getting Any?
Women, single or coupled, sexual activity.
43% twice a week or more. **29%** about once a week, **18%** more like once a month, **10%** more like once a year



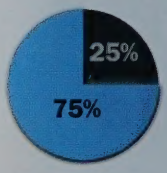
Monogomous?
Of those women in relationships, 80% women are monogamous. 20% [1 out of 5] is having sex with other women.

Bi?
Of women who prefer to slee with other women 77% have not slept with a man for one year or more, 16% have slept with a man less than a year ago, 7% have never slept with a man.

Good Sex?
Of women having sex with other woman, 42% are experiencing intense orgasm everytime, 39% Most of the time, 19% Hardly ever

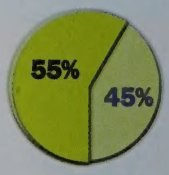
Use Protection with man or woman?
70% nevcr use anything, 26% use when feel necessary, 4% use every time.

Brothas



Single?
75% single men
25% in relationships

Getting Any?
men, single or coupled, sexual activity, 31% everyday, 25% three times a week, 26% more like once a week, 17% more like once month.



Monogomous?
Of those men in relationships, 45% men are monogamous. 55% are having sex with other men.

Bi?
Of men who prefer to sleep with other men 57% have not slept with a woman for one year or more; 34% have never slept with a woman; 9% have slept with a woman less than a year ago.

Use Protection with man or woman?
47% use every time; 39% use when feel necessary; 14% nevcr use anything.

Sexual Style?
49% I don't prefer 'top' or 'bottom.' I enjoy both; 20% I look like 'top' but prefer penetration; 16% I look like a 'top' and I am; 12% I look like a bottom and I am; 1% I look like a 'bottom' but prefer being the penetrator.

"So what is it that makes the zip go out? Emotional reasons seems to be an answer. Start by changing your focus from sex to intimacy."

Unlike most skills, we are rarely taught how to communicate on a deep level. And in our busy lives, we often share the details of our days rather than the contents of our hearts. Intimacy is a habit that needs fostering like a good tennis serve. And the results are far more beneficial.

TIPS ON IMPROVING INTIMATE CONNECTIONS

1. Start small. And start with yourself. It's so easy to expect "the other" to be responsible for communication and connection.

2. Avoid setting up a "serious conversation." Its almost guaranteed to build stress and cause avoidance.

3. Be more forthcoming about your own feelings. Use the phrases like "I wonder if..." or "Sometimes, I doubt whether I..." or "I've noticed I'm happiest when..."

4. State your feelings rather than your opinions. If what you're saying includes the word "that," hold back! Warning: most sentences of feeling that contain the word "that" - aren't! They're judgements! Use your smarts here. Think about it. Saying something like "I feel that she [or you)..." is not stating a feeling – its an opinion. That's very different. Feelings words are words like: ashamed, embarrassed, sad, apprehensive, frightened, delighted, excited, nervous, serene, etc. Intimacy is built on feelings, not critiques. Watch how you express yours.

5. Ask questions about feelings. "How do you feel about that?" is not the same as "What do you think about that?" Most of us express our thoughts far more easily and often than our feelings. Yet sharing what we feel is what connects us to another. When you've asked the question and your partner responds with, "I think..." listen carefully and try to focus on the feeling behind the thoughts. A gentle, "Umm, I get your thinking and I'm wondering how you feel." This takes practice – for both of you.

6. Remember, a deep breath is a good tool before plunging in. It's not helpful to criticize by pointing out what's lacking when your partner shares.

7. Practice courage. When you find yourself avoiding a topic, analyze why it's hard to bring up. Ask yourself, "What concern, need, fear or desire is attached to this topic. What am I trying to avoid?" You may need to ask this question many times before the answers reaches you through whatever filters you've may create to bypass a difficult issue. You may want to jot down the answers.

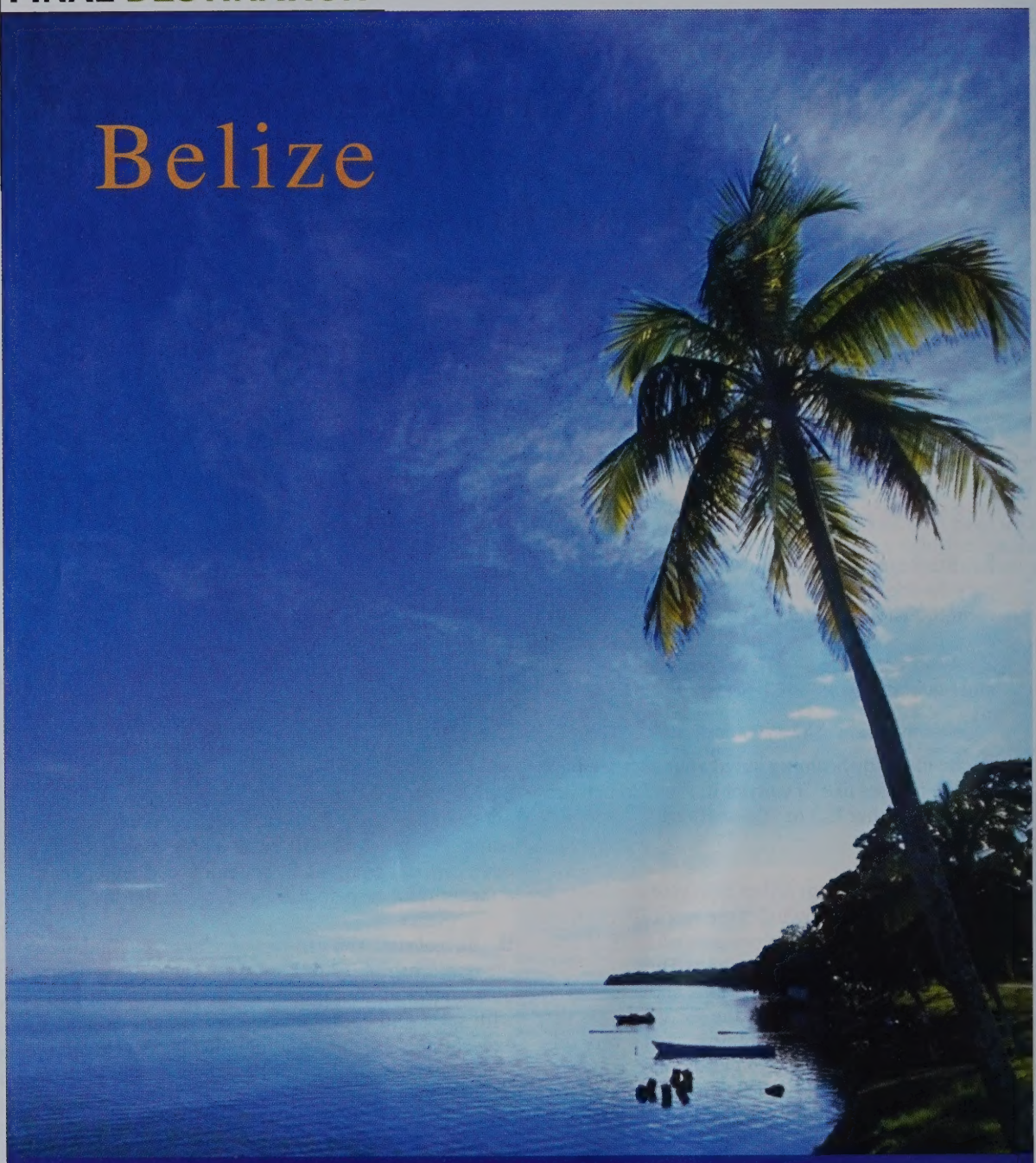
8. When you're clear on what makes a particular issue a "hot button" topic, take a deep breath. Develop an "I" statement to open the dialogue. "I" statements avoid blame. They are statements over which we take responsibility rather than point a finger. "I feel frightened when weeks go by without cuddling," or "I felt secure when you told your parents we couldn't visit until my big project was over," are examples of "I" statements. They open a meaningful conversation and invite sharing.

9. Be realistic. You can only work on your end of the relationship. And that takes practice, a sense of humor and courage. Like any skill executed with style and confidence, practice and realistic expectations are the main ingredients. And when you fumble, laugh at yourself. Failure is only feedback on how to succeed next time.

When working on creating a connection, remember to start small, start with yourself, be ready to laugh at yourself, develop courage, be realistic and be patient. And try and try again. The result is a rock solid love that binds you and your lover and reignites the fires of passion.

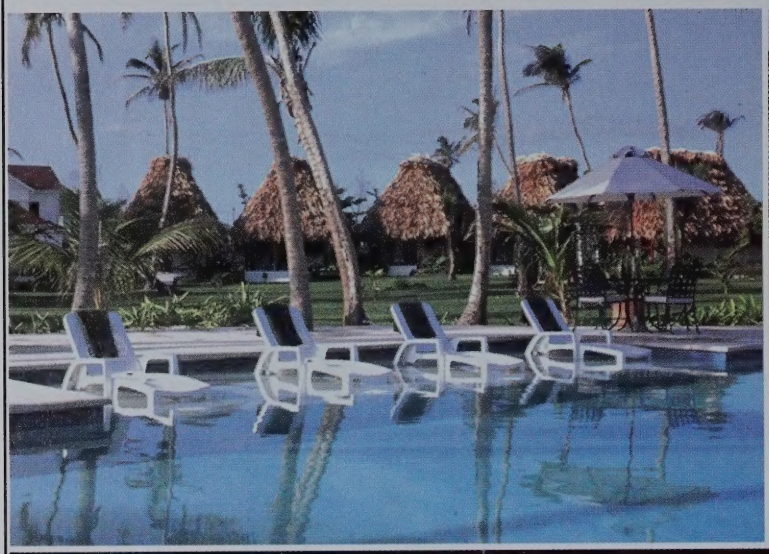
Annette Segal is co-author of "The Game of Truth: A Humorous Guide to Self-Discovery" (Educational Dynamics Press, 2000, ISBN 0966887603) and is a leading edge educator, curriculum developer and workshop designer.

Belize



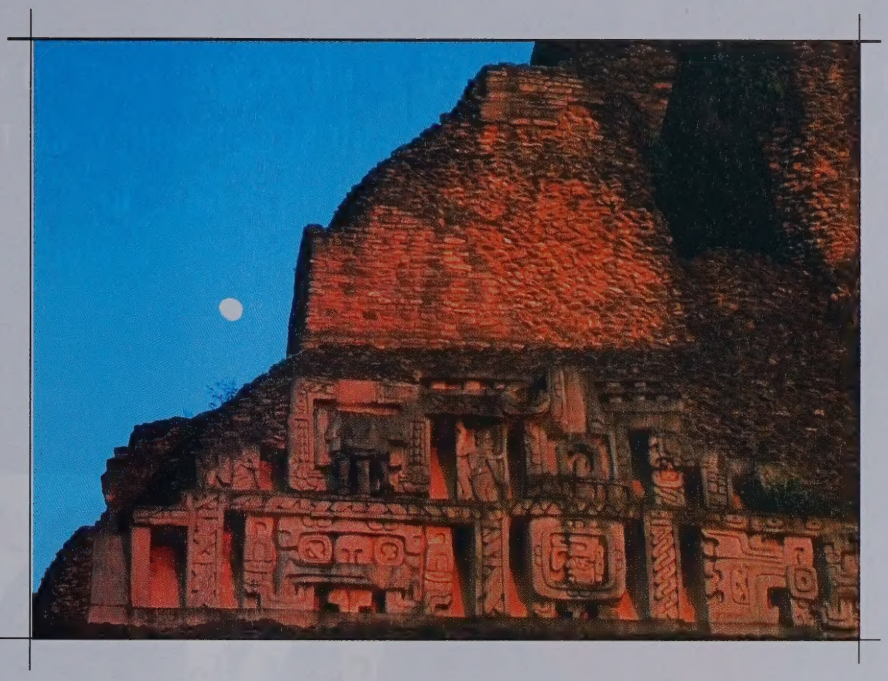
"The capital of Belize was moved to Belmopan in 1970 after hurricane Hattie destroyed much of Belize City in 1961. June to November is the rain season. No visa is required to travel but an American, European Union or Commonwealth country passport and return ticket are needed."

Nestled on Central America's Coast just south of Mexico and to the east and north of Guatemala, Belize was visited by 98 million travelers in the past 5 years. What is all the hype? Belize is a land of verdant rain forests, waterfalls, ancient ruins, wildlife, sparkling rivers, majestic mountains, cavernous caves, barrier reefs and pure white sand beaches (FOX TV's Temptation Island is filmed here). Belize is just two hours away from Miami or Houston. English is the official language. Belize was the cradle of the ancient Maya civilization and is now home to people of African, Carib, Mayan, Spanish, Chinese, East Indian, Lebanese, European, Mexican and German Mennonite descent.



accommodations

Victoria House' accommodations range from private honey-moon villas to thatched roof huts on the beach. Caribbean plantation style rooms from a bygone era are nestled within acres of tropical gardens. All accommodations are air-conditioned and feature balconies and verandahs that offer spectacular sunrise ocean views. Victoria House is located on the popular island of Ambergris Caye. Access to a 185 mile barrier reef; the world's 2nd largest barrier reef next to Australia can . But visitors may also want to just relax and watch a breathtaking sunset from hammocks right at the water's edge.



history

Belize is a country of ancient civilization. It is also a country shaped by European exploitation, slavery, colonialism, migration of peoples and the movement towards independence. The advanced ancient Mayan civilization was spread out over what is now Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Belize- "Mundo Maya". Belize is believed to have been the heart of Mayan civilization with 3/4 of a million Maya living there between 250 A.D. to 900 A.D.

Mysteriously, the Maya civilization began to fade by the year 1000 A.D. Spanish fortune hunters came in the 1500s and were deposed by British colonialists in 1798. They established "British Honduras in 1862. Logwood was the main industry of these colonialists. They bought African slaves to exploit their labor.

In 1724, the first record of slaves was documented. They originated from Jamaica, the U.S.A and Africa. Before 1750 3/4 of Belize's population were slaves (3000). Resistance to slavery manifested itself in three slave revolts; 1760,1770 and 1820.

Emancipation from slavery came in 1838. Laborers were brought from Caribbean islands and China to work on small sugar estates. The majority of the current population are Creole, descendants of African slaves mixed with European ancestry.

Creole people dominate the industries of civil service, media and politics. The Garifuna, people of African and Carib ancestry, came in numbers to Belize from the Bay Islands of Honduras in 1832. They make up 7% of the population. Mestizos, or people of Mexican and Mayan ancestry, make up 44% of the population and speak Spanish. There are also the Belizean Maya (11% of the population) who speak Ketchi & the Mopan Maya.

The independence movement in Belize won the right to self-government in 1964 but due to a territory dispute with Guatemala, Belize did not take its name or become a fully independent nation until 1981. Marcus Garvey visited Belize in 1922, a testament to the Pan Africanist spirit in Belize. The current Prime Minister is Said Musa. Marion Jones, the 3 –time gold medal winner and 2x bronze medal winner at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games is a well know Belizean.

dining and entertainment

Real Belizean cooking is spicy and sometimes hot. A staple is rice and beans with either meat, chicken, vegetables, fish or seafood. Be sure to sample conch ceviche, a local seafood appetizer. The cayes are popular for alfresco dining and fresh seafood. Try escabeche, a clear vinegar-based onion soup cooked with chicken; mole (pronounced mo-lay), a spicy chocolate-based soup made with chicken or pork, and chilmole, a dinner soup made with recado (mestizo seasoning). Belizean conch soup is made with calalloo. Cow-foot soup is a real delicacy. Garifuna influence are found in sere, a fish chowder with coconut-milk base and hudut, a seafood dish served with coconut milk and plantains.

travel tips

The capital of Belize was moved to Belmopan in 1970 after hurricane Hattie destroyed much of Belize City in 1961. June to November is the rain season. No Visa is required to travel to Belize but an American, European Union or Commonwealth country passport and a return ticket are needed. American, Continental and TACA Airlines fly from Dallas, Miami and Houston respectively. call 800/624-0686 or visit www.travelbelize.org.

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JUNE 15, 2002	ATLANTA LEOPARDS vs. NASHVILLE DREAM	(AWAY)
JUNE 29, 2002	ALABAMA RENEGADES vs. ATLANTA LEOPARDS	(HOME)

The Execution of Wanda Jean
continued from page 69

the rub. Was Wanda Jean Allen a victim, too? In my opinion, the film won't change any minds on that score. If you're against the death penalty, The Execution of Wanda Jean will be used as evidence to support your case. If you're for the death penalty, the same film can be used as evidence to support your point of view. This is not because of the even hand of the filmmaker; her bias against the death penalty is clear. This static situation arises because of the facts of the case and Wanda Jean's appearance. She neither acts retarded, or remorseful. We live in a society that requires sackcloth and ashes.

Testimony from psychiatric experts show that Wanda Jean is mentally retarded. There is damage to her brain's frontal lobe that is not only a cause for retardation, but also the source of an uncontrollable anger. Her brother believes this abnormality came about when a car struck Wanda Jean in her youth and she fell on her head. "She never acted right after that. That's all I know," he says. Prison psychiatrists also noted her behavior and recommended psychiatric treatment for it. Wanda Jean was in prison for murdering another one of her lovers. Somehow, she was released from prison, only to commit her second murder. At a clemency hearing, prosecutors pointed out that prior to this murder, Wanda Jean had written two threatening letters to her lover warning her if she tried to leave the relationship, Wanda would hunt her down. And so she did.

Hanging over the scene like a pall was this question: What if Wanda Jean Allen had gotten the recommended treatment? She didn't and another life fell through the crack. The defense built its case, or its hopes, on the testimony of an expert witness—a psychiatrist. Neither the clemency board, appeals court, nor the governor bought it. The final scene of this documentary is at the funeral of Wanda Jean Allen. As we look at what appears to be a restful Wanda Jean, the credits roll and someone singing in the style of gospel music's great Mahalia Jackson rivets us with "I'll Fly Away." At that moment we wondered who benefited from this death, especially since the family of the murdered woman had forgiven Wanda Jean and didn't want to see her die. I'll fly away. Oh Glory, I'll fly away.

Stone Cold Angie
continued from page 67

This kind of intense drama is nothing new to Stone. She's already survived the heartache of broken relationships, maintained hectic schedules promoting her current album and her 1999 platinum-selling debut "Black Diamond," while still carving out time to raise her two children. Today, she lives by a motto that she dedicates to her gay and lesbian fans: "Believe none of what you hear and half of what you see."

> "A brotha is a brotha at the end of the day."

Still, Crawford and Rhonda refuse to buy Stone's CD or attend her shows in the future. For Stone, the future includes a European tour in March and another set of dates in the States later this year. Stone further insists she has no problem performing for gay and lesbian audiences, and she says she'll tell audiences at future shows that "Brotha" is for all brothas." A brotha is a brotha at the end of the day," Stone affirmed, "What you choose to be and how you choose to live your life is your business. It has absolutely no bearing on anything. As long as you are happy with who you are and what God is doing in your life, who the hell am I or anyone to challenge you for it?"

Michael K. Watts is a freelance journalist based in New York.

One Mo' Time
continued from page __

gold tooth. An occasional ham or turkey would never cause as much "checking the number on your ticket" as a gold tooth. The theatre seated between 350-500 people, and as the only live entertainment house for blacks, usually held a capacity house.

Many colored performers, particularly in the early stages of their careers, alternated between the Negro variety houses and the white ones. The goal, of course, of every vaudeville artist of whatever race or color was the Palace on Broadway. Some performers from the T.O.B.A. eventually made it there and saw their names blown up into top billing--Bill Robinson, Ethel Waters, Bessie Smith, and Bert Williams just to name a few notables.

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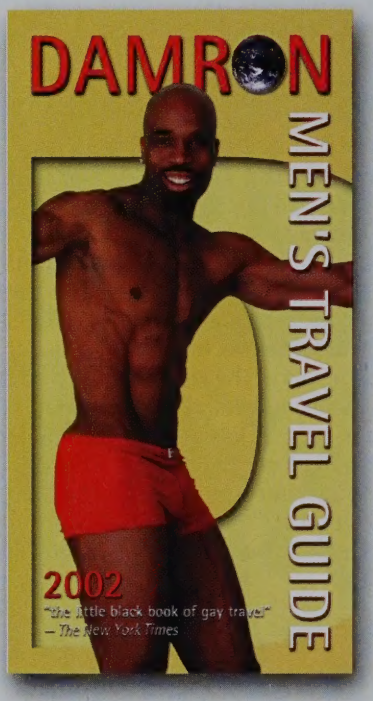

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save the date

Mick Hicks

the original queen of disco

Sylvester

edited by Malcolm Venerable

A true superstar, Sylvester represented the black, gay origins of disco and took his style to mainstream America. His versatile 14 albums include crucial contributions to the disco songbook as well as ballads, and his unapologetic fierceness led the way for other mainstream gay sensations including Boy George and RuPaul.

Sylvester James was born to a working class family in Los Angeles. After moving to San Francisco, he spent time in the experimental troupe Cockettes, where he began his performing career. After an unsuccessful stint leading the rock group Hot Band in the early 1970s, Sylvester's luck changed after meeting Harvey Fuqua, a scout for Fantasy Records. Fuqua signed Sylvester and the two began work on an album.

"Sylvester jumped at the chance to hire Izora Whitehead and Martha Wash, discovered singing background vocals at a concert."

Sylvester jumped at the chance to hire Izora Whitehead and Martha Wash, discovered singing background vocals at a concert. He renamed the hefty pair the Two Tons of Fun and they were an integral part of Sylvester's success, adding stage presence and memories of his gospel roots. "Sylvester" dropped in 1977 without much fanfare but gained cult status with a remake of the Ashford and Simpson's "Over and Over."

His greatest achievement would be Step II. As the LP was being recorded, Sylvester let Patrick Cowley, then an up-and-coming remixer, hear an early version of "You Make Me Feel Mighty Real." Cowley's transformed the ballad into a disco tour de force with synch overlays, a driving beat and keyboard flourishes. The classic tune reflected the intensity of gay disco at its best, while Sylvester's impassioned vocals communicated the anticipation of sex. Arriving at the height of disco mania, the combination proved irresistible and much to the horror of disco haters and homophobes (who were largely one and the same), he was launched into the mainstream. The accompanying video made a mockery of Fuqua's attempts to tone down his flamboyance, as Sylvester strolled around a disco in full drag. "Mighty Real" won several Billboard disco awards, shooting Sylvester into disco's stratosphere.

Despite the obvious magic he had with dance material, Sylvester never viewed himself as a disco act. He really wanted to be Patti Labelle. Therefore, he announced that Stars, his second, would be his only pure disco album. A four-track celebration of nightlife, the album dared you to sit down as he and the Tons worked the hell out of "I Who Have Nothing." Disco crashed in 1980, so Fuqua decided to branch out into other styles. He soon had Sylvester doing strange versions of "Ooh Baby Baby" and "Cry Me A River," while actually banning Cowley from entering the studio.

Creative differences led to his signing with Cowley's Megatone label after doing the lead on Cowley's "Menergy." The timing was impeccable as the label had a completed album sitting in the vaults that it couldn't release due to the singer's outrageous financial demands. Sylvester simply cut new vocals and All I Need was born. The record was highlighted by the driving "Do You Wanna Funk," a more aggressive sequel to "Mighty Real" that was a huge hit and set the template for hi-NRG.

Call Me and M-1015 were his other albums for the label, but because of Cowley's death from AIDS, Sylvester had to work with producers Ken Kessie and Morey Goldstein, who couldn't match Cowley's standard. "Take Me to Heaven," "Sex" and "Band of Gold" were all dance hits, but didn't quite compare to the Fantasy material.

After years of paying dues with small companies, Sylvester found himself on Warner Brothers for Mutual Attraction. "Someone Like You" had a Larry Levan mix, but he was unable to take full advantage of his new resources as he was diagnosed with AIDS. He stopped performing, but stayed in the spotlight to raise awareness about the disease. He died in 1988 at only 40 but with a legacy that will forever endure.

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"I have read several articles relating to Me'Shell, and what particularly interested me about this article is the 'rawness' and 'realness' that comes across about her and her life's journey."

Love Match

I read your article on Me'Shell Ndegeocello[Vol. 8 No. 3 2002]. She speaks about her relationship with Rebecca Walker. They've been together for a long time and seem to share a soulmate-oriented relationship. I do a lot of research on astrological compatibility between couples. Me'Shell and I share the same zodiac sign (Virgo). I'm very curious to know what Rebecca's is. I've searched every biography for Rebecca Walker published online but have unfortunately been unsuccessful in finding that information on my own. Outside of 1969 and Jackson, Miss., an actual birthdate is never indicated.

I was wondering if you can provide me with the zodiac sign or birthdate of Rebecca Walker. Although I'm sure this request isn't one of your most important ones, it is to me. As an African-American bisexual female Virgo, their love match hits close to home. Thanks in advance for your help. Keep up the good work on the magazine.

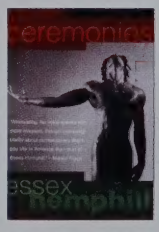
Shaunda Brunston
Via the Internet

Practical Advice

I enjoyed your cover article relating to Ms. Me'Shell. I thought once again you guys did an excellent job in capturing the heart and soul of the individual you interview. I have read several articles relating to Me'Shell, and what particularly interested me about this article is the "rawness" and "realness" that comes across about her and her life's journey. I am sure all who read her story will be enlightened and inspired.

Tiye Lasley,
Executive Director
AALU African American Lesbians United

write a letter, get a book



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Jennifer Holliday

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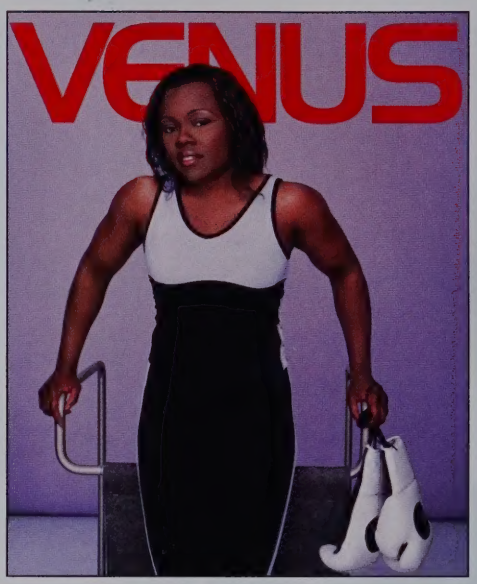

Professional Suicide

In answer to Phil Petrie's question: "Is There A New World Coming for Gay Athletes in Team Sports?" [Vol. 8 No. 2, 2002]

Yes. And that world will be led by athletes with the backbone to debunk the myth that being openly gay is professional suicide. That world will be led by athletes whose sexuality won't matter because they do what team owners and advertisers expect them to do: win.

And if they don't get the endorsements that others get, somehow they'll manage to live the way they did before they turned pro and the way the rest of us do: without them.

Steve Langley
Washington, DC

My Surprise

I just want to thank you again for your support and encouragement of my work as an artist. I have received many reposes due to the feature article in *Venus*. To my surprise many of the straight black-folks at my teaching job read *Venus* Magazine and were talking about the recent issue and the article on Me'Shell Ndegeocello.

I know your work is important to many people and is crossing borders that need crossing.

Zenzele Browne
InTheLightArts.com
New York City, NY

WHAT KALETRA HAS TO OFFER MAY SURPRISE YOU

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FOR THE TREATMENT OF HIV

KALETRA is indicated for the treatment of HIV infection in combination with other antiretroviral agents in patients 6 months of age or older. KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing of HIV to others.

Safety Information

KALETRA should not be taken if you have had an allergic reaction to KALETRA or any of its ingredients.

KALETRA must not be taken with certain drugs due to the potential for serious and/or life-threatening side effects. Discuss all medicines, including those without a prescription and herbal preparations, you are taking or plan to take with your doctor or pharmacist.

Pancreatitis and liver problems, which may cause death, have been reported in patients receiving KALETRA. Tell your doctor if you have or have had liver disease such as hepatitis. Your doctor may want to monitor your liver function. In patients taking protease inhibitors, increased bleeding (in patients with hemophilia) and diabetes/high blood sugar have occurred. Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Some patients receiving KALETRA have had large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

The most commonly reported side effects of moderate or severe intensity are: abnormal bowel movements, diarrhea, feeling weak or tired, headache, and nausea. Children most often reported diarrhea, rash, taste aversion, and vomiting.

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol.

Please see adjacent page for Patient Information.

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KALETRA™
(lopinavir/ritonavir) capsules
(lopinavir/ritonavir) oral solution

ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with KALETRA. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

Patient Information

KALETRA™
(kuh-LEE-tra)

Generic Name: lopinavir/ritonavir
(lop-IN-uh-veer/rit-ON-uh-veer)

Read this leaflet carefully before you start taking KALETRA. Also, read it each time you get your KALETRA prescription refilled, in case something has changed. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor when you start this medicine and at check ups. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about KALETRA.

What is KALETRA and how does it work?

KALETRA is a combination of two medicines. They are lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor. KALETRA is always used in combination with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. KALETRA is for adults and for children age 6 months and older.

HIV infection destroys CD4 (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

KALETRA blocks HIV protease, a chemical which is needed for HIV to multiply. KALETRA reduces the amount of HIV in your blood and increases the number of T cells. Reducing the amount of HIV in the blood reduces the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

Does KALETRA cure HIV or AIDS?
KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Does KALETRA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

KALETRA does not reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take KALETRA?

- You should stay under a doctor's care when taking KALETRA. Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- You must take KALETRA every day exactly as your doctor prescribed it. The dose of KALETRA may be different for you than for other patients. Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.
- Dosing in adults (including children 12 years of age and older): The usual dose for adults is 3 capsules (400/100 mg) or 5.0 mL of the oral solution twice a day (morning and night), in combination with other anti-HIV medicines.
- Dosing in children from 6 months to 12 years of age: Children from 6 months to 12 years of age can also take KALETRA. The child's doctor will decide the right dose based on the child's weight.
- Take KALETRA with food to help it work better.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking KALETRA without first talking with your doctor.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- Be sure to set up a schedule and follow it carefully.
- Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give KALETRA to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

What should I do if I miss a dose of KALETRA?

It is important that you do not miss any doses. If you miss a dose of KALETRA, take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

What happens if I take too much KALETRA?

If you suspect that you took more than the prescribed dose of this medicine, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

As with all prescription medicines, KALETRA should be kept out of the reach of young children. KALETRA liquid contains a large amount of alcohol. If a toddler or young child accidentally drinks more than the recommended dose of KALETRA, it could make him/her sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately if this happens.

Who should not take KALETRA?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether KALETRA is right for you.

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. These could cause serious side effects that could cause death. Before you take KALETRA, you must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or are planning to take. These include other prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.

For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please read the section titled "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir or lopinavir.

Can I take KALETRA with other medications?*

KALETRA may interact with other medicines, including those you take without a prescription. You must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or planning to take before you take KALETRA.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA:

- Do not take the following medicines with KALETRA because they can cause serious problems or death if taken with KALETRA.
  - Dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methylergonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, Ergotrate Maleate, Methergine, and others
  - Halcion® (triazolam)
  - Hismanal® (astemizole)
  - Orap® (pimozide)
  - Propulsid® (cisapride)
  - Rythmol® (propafenone)
  - Seldane® (terfenadine)
  - Tambocor™ (flecainide)
  - Versed® (midazolam)
- Do not take KALETRA with rifampin, also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®. Rifampin may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease KALETRA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to KALETRA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV medicines.
- Do not take KALETRA with the cholesterol-lowering medicines Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible serious reactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between KALETRA and Lipitor® (atorvastatin); talk to your doctor before you take any of these cholesterol-reducing medicines with KALETRA.

Medicines that require dosage adjustments:

It is possible that your doctor may need to increase or decrease the dose of other medicines when you are also taking KALETRA. Remember to tell your doctor all medicines you are taking or plan to take.

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with KALETRA, talk to your doctor about problems these two medicines can cause when taken together. You may get increased side effects of VIAGRA, such as low blood pressure, vision changes, and penis erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

- If you are taking oral contraceptives ("the pill") to prevent pregnancy, you should use an additional or different type of contraception since KALETRA may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.
- Efavirenz (Sustiva™) or nevirapine (Viramune®) may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood. Your doctor may increase your dose of KALETRA if you are also taking efavirenz or nevirapine.
- If you are taking Mycobutin® (rifabutin), your doctor will lower the dose of Mycobutin.
- **A change in therapy should be considered if you are taking KALETRA with:**
  Phenobarbital
  Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
  Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)
  These medicines may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- **Other Special Considerations:**
  KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take metronidazole or disulfiram. Severe nausea and vomiting can occur.
- **If you are taking both didanosine (Videx®) and KALETRA:**
  Didanosine (Videx®) should be taken one hour before or two hours after KALETRA.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

- This list of side effects is **not** complete. If you have questions about side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You should report any new or continuing symptoms to your doctor right away. Your doctor may be able to help you manage these side effects.
- The most commonly reported side effects of moderate severity that are thought to be drug related are: abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache, and nausea. Children taking KALETRA may sometimes get a skin rash.
- Blood tests in patients taking KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Liver problems including death have occurred in patients taking KALETRA. In studies, it is unclear if KALETRA caused these liver problems because some patients had other illnesses or were taking other medicines.
- Some patients taking KALETRA can develop serious problems with their pancreas (pancreatitis), which may cause death. You have a higher chance of having pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occur in patients taking protease inhibitors such as KALETRA. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients need changes in their diabetes medicine. Others needed new diabetes medicine.
- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors.
- There have been other side effects in patients taking KALETRA. However, these side effects may have been due to other medicines that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Some of these side effects can be serious.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

- *If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant:* The effects of KALETRA on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known.
- *If you are breast-feeding:* Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that HIV can be transmitted through breast-feeding.
- *If you have liver problems:* If you have liver problems or are infected with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, you should tell your doctor before taking KALETRA.
- *If you have diabetes:* Some people taking protease inhibitors develop new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you have diabetes or an increase in thirst or frequent urination.
- *If you have hemophilia:* Patients taking KALETRA may have increased bleeding.

How do I store KALETRA?

- Keep KALETRA and all other medicines out of the reach of children.
- Refrigerated KALETRA capsules and oral solution remain stable until the expiration date printed on the label. If stored at room temperature up to 77°F (25°C), KALETRA capsules and oral solution should be used within 2 months.
- Avoid exposure to excessive heat.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

General advice about prescription medicines:

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider if you have any questions about this medicine or your condition. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information Leaflet. If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you information about this medicine that was written for health care professionals. Do not use this medicine for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share this medicine with other people.

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features

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Venus spotlights the Top 20 Black Icons who have a special place in the hearts of gays and lesbians. Read all about the divas, the divos and the quiet soldiers who keep turning it out!

60 **Pitch Power**
Meet Maisha Yearwood, a film writer-creator who has several sitcom and film projects in the works. Read how this young writer has major Hollywood production houses sold on her ideas.

95 **Death of a Poetic Genius**
Prolific poet and educator June Jordan died last June, just a year and a half after writer Shirlette Ammons sat in on one of Jordan's classes at the University of California at Berkeley. Ammons remembers inspirational moments from that day with Jordan and pays tribute to an almost unsung hero in the African American struggle.

Maisha Yearwood

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Lester Cohen/Wireimage

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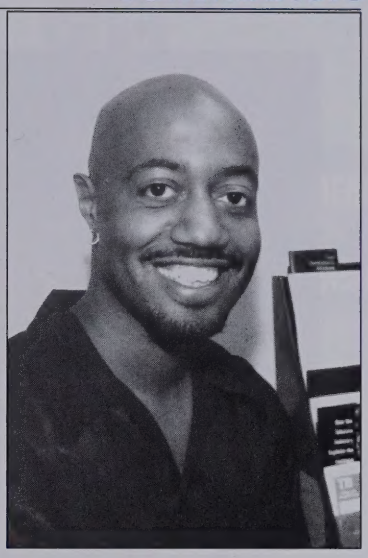
94 Piece of Mind
In the last issue of Venus, Dorinda Henry criticized the Human Rights Campaign's relationship with the Black Gay Community (*Bridge Over Troubled Waters*, Vol. 8, No. 3). Donna Payne from the Human Rights Campaign responds to Henry's accusations.

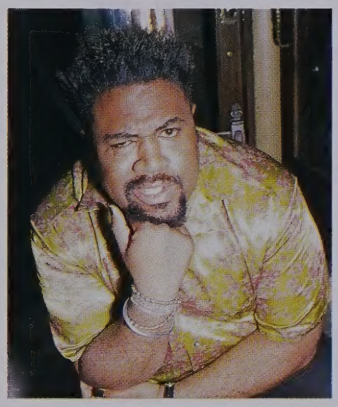
98 Legendary
Composer and pianist Billy Strayhorn was more than just Duke Ellington's primary collaborator. Venus remembers the life and contributions of an openly-gay musician.

Elyce Strong is an aspiring television writer, living in Los Angeles. She was raised in Memphis, Tenn., attended Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga., and worked in news for many years after graduation. She soon tired of news and began investigating dramatic television writing, which lead to her move to the West Coast. Currently, she works as an assistant to Emmy Award-winning writer David Mills (HBO's *The Corner, NYPD Blue, ER*). Author of *The Top 20 Black Icons*, pg. 36, Elyce says, "This list of Who's Who make me proud to be Black! It's a potpourri of impressive personalities of our parent's generation, ours, and our children's."

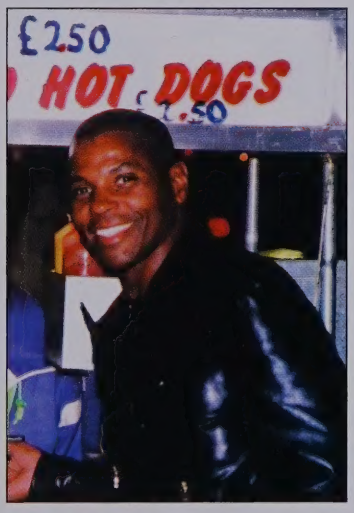


Craig Washington was born and lovingly raised by Anna and Leon Washington in Queens, New York and has lived in Atlanta for 10 years. His writings have been published in Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Arise, Clikque, and Southern Voice. He currently serves as executive director for the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Center. Check his story Stand up & Represent on pg. 75

Anderson Jones is based in Los Angeles, where he met bicoastal Maisha Yearwood. [see pg. 60.] Jones writes Movie Scoop, a weekly column about movie industry news and buzz for E! Online. "I think she's an inspiration for all of us Black folks in entertainment," he says. Jones has worked for the Detroit Free News, Philadelphia Inquirer and freelanced for Entertainment Weekly, The New York Times. He's also published Men Together, a photo-essay book that documents gay men in long-term relationships.



Shirlette Ammons is a writer of working class currently residing in Raleigh, N.C. "I draw strength from June Jordan's quote, 'A woman's body is the universal shelter.' It inspires me to rely on that salient space, which is my spiritual artsource." Shirlette's first book of poetry entitled, Stumphole: Anthology of Backwoods Blood, was released this summer (www.stumphole.com). She is also the bassist/vocalist for the Raleigh-based band, stumP. Read her tribute to Jordan on pg. 95



Michael K. Watts serves as 'Guest Editor' for this issue of Venus, playing an integral role in the cover story on Black Icons. Michael's nine-year background as an entertainment journalist for FOX and MTV helped make this month's task a breeze. "Our staff had a hard time narrowing the pool down to just 20 icons. There are so many who have touched our lives in so many ways," Michael says. He also wrote the recent cover stories on Meshell Ndegeocello and Veronica Simmons. Michael resides in New York City.

Michael A. Adams cruises through the streets, shops, spas and restaurants in London and sends us the 411 on where and how the British get down. With his own new travel television pilot in the editing room this 'prince of travel' is always on the go but never too busy to keep VENUS readers in the know.

publisher's note

Jena Jones

It's been a long time coming, but we finally get to collectively say, "Bravo!" to 20 of our favorite Black icons. Their names are household words but to Black gay folks, they are even more special either because of the support they have shown our community or because of their sheer fabulousness. Elyce Strong and Michael K. Watts had a tough time keeping the list to 20. (See if you agree with the mostly entertainer-filled list, page 40.) Then it's on to Hollywood where screenwriter Maisha Yearwood talks to E! Entertainment's Andy Jones about her career and the success she is enjoying, in "Power of the Pitch," on page 56.

Any day is World AIDS day when you are infected with or threatened by the virus. Our special section on AIDS in the African-American community brings awareness through features on Bishop Rainey Cheeks, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and an eye-opening story that will bring sistahs out of denial about their "down-low" men, page 66. Enjoy the issue!

Charlene Cothran

VENUS

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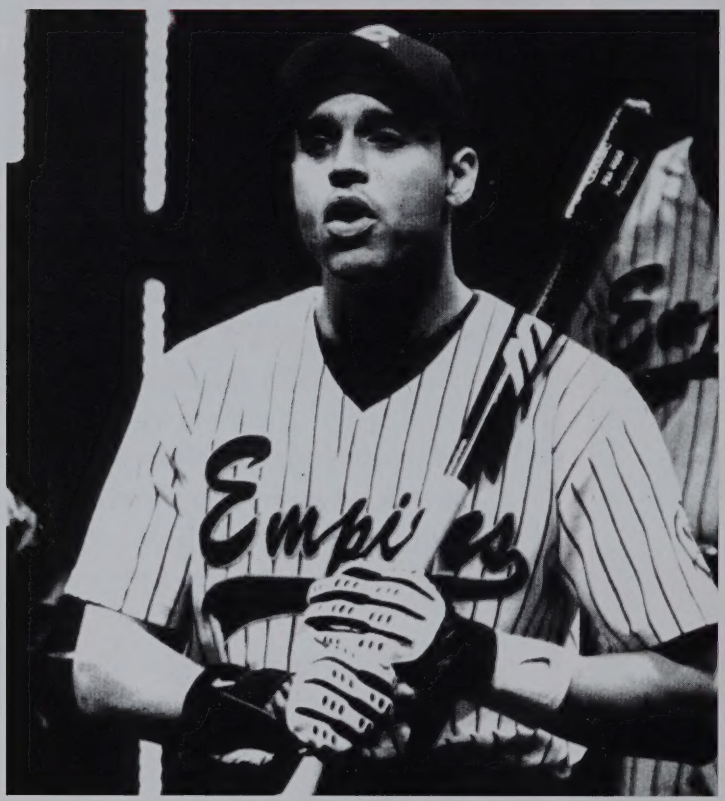
2 balls, no strikes, 1 out



An openly gay playa bats with no shame in his game

words by Steve Langley

> "At a news conference at the peak of his Major League Baseball career, Darren Lemming comes out swinging and not both ways, either. He coyly reveals that, off the field, he bats only with the boys."

At a news conference at the peak of his Major League Baseball career, Darren Lemming comes out swinging—and not both ways, either. He coyly reveals that off the field he bats only with the boys.

This bombshell comes in the early innings of *Take Me Out*, the new Richard Greenberg play that premiered in London and runs through Oct. 27 at the Joseph Papp Public Theater in New York.

We don't see Darren wrestle with whether or how he should break the news. No rumors, jilted lover or tabloid photos force him out. He just does it.

And why shouldn't he? The product of a white mother and a Black father, Darren is high yella, fine, buffed, butch, brilliant, widely praised and highly paid. Whom shall he fear? God? As far as he's concerned, he is God.

Such confidence keeps his teammates on their heels. Darren's presence in the shower gives them the creeps—even when he's not there. Since much of the story takes place in the locker room, there is ample nudity amid this multiracial cast—though size queens will not be impressed.

But for all the nakedness and sexual subtext, orchestrated for maximum effect by director Joe Mantello, there is no romance and no sex, at least not consensual. Darren (played with virile aloofness by Daniel Sunjata) talks a good game, but never about his love life. His homosexuality, evidently, is all in his head. In one bizarre twist, he sexually assaults a racist, homo-hating redneck relief pitcher in the shower, more out of anger than lust.

Two-thirds into this three-hour saga, Shane Mungit, the relief pitcher from the minor leagues, steals the spotlight, mainly because of the trouble he ignites. At this point, the play loses focus. Apparently for Greenberg, a gay dramatist who became obsessed with baseball three years ago, the story isn't about Darren or Shane. It's about the grand ole game.

Steve Langley is a playwright living in Washington, D.C. His latest work, Cut/Uncut, received a staged reading this summer at The Kennedy Center.

SAFETY INFORMATION

- COMBIVIR does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others
- COMBIVIR should be used with other HIV medicines
- Make sure to see your doctor regularly because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells
- A buildup of lactic acid in the blood and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen
- Low risk of problems with the pancreas in adults and adolescents
- The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose

Please see important information for COMBIVIR on adjacent page.

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ONE TABLET TWICE A DAY

Patient Information about COMBIVIR Tablets

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
Generic name: lamivudine/zidovudine tablets

Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR. Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your doctor. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC®] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) Tablets [ZDV], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (la-MIV-u-deen) and zidovudine (Zi-DOHV-u-deen), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and either two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine (also known as EPIVIR or 3TC) or zidovudine (also known as RETROVIR or ZDV).

Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR, or TRIZIVIR® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine.

Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

If you are 65 years of age or over, consult your healthcare professional about the functioning of your liver, kidneys, and heart; about other illnesses you may suffer from, and about any other medications you may be taking. It is possible that the dosage may need to be modified.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: 1-800-258-4263.
- You are breast-feeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breast-feed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.

Also talk to your doctor about:

- Problems with your blood counts.
- Problems with your muscles.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes. COMBIVIR can be taken with most other medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects occurring in 5% or more of patients included: muscle and joint pain, headache, nausea, weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion.

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted; your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience. Although it may make you healthier, COMBIVIR does not cure HIV.

Safety Information

Make sure to see your doctor regularly, because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells. A buildup of acid in the blood, and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen. The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose.

Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.

gsk GlaxoSmithKline
GlaxoSmithKline
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

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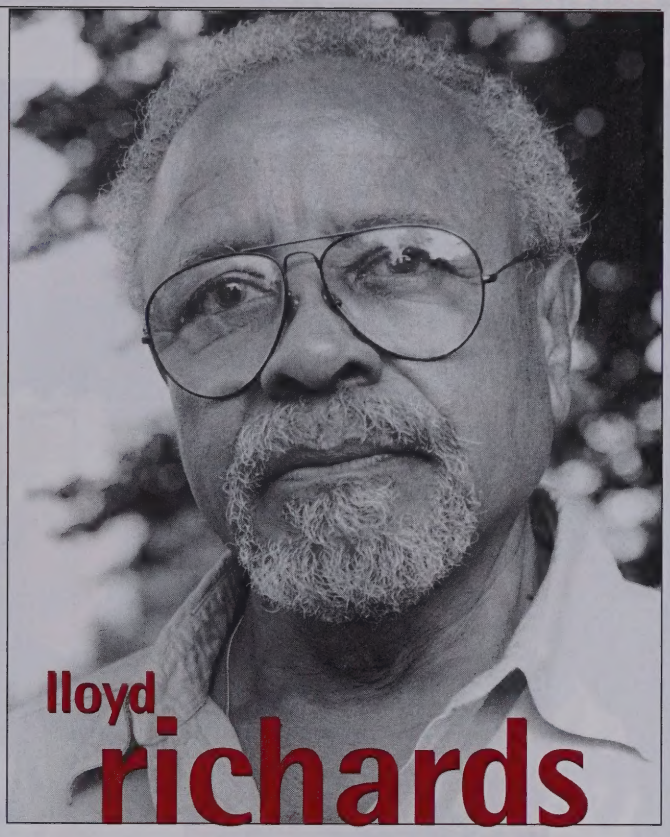
Tony award-winning director and drama innovator, Lloyd Richards is one of the pioneers of African-American Theatre and the winner of this year's Gish Prize.



One of the most revered pioneers of American Theatre, Tony Award-winning director and Yale University professor emeritus Lloyd Richards, will be presented with this year's Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for his part in shaping modern theater and guiding some of the today's leading voices to the stage. Richards will receive the honor—a silver medallion and approximately $200,000—at an awards ceremony held at the Hudson Theatre, Millennium Broadway, New York City this Fall.

In over 40 years of work, Richards has discovered and nurtured countless new playwrights, and staged some of the country's most significant stories, giving theatergoers an ever-changing and challenging perspective on life. He was instrumental in the ground-breaking introduction of the African-American voice to Broadway, making history in 1959 as the first Black director of the first Black drama by the first Black woman playwright on the Great Way. Over the years he's continued to expand the African-American experience onstage, working with talents like Sidney Poitier and August Wilson. Offstage, Richards made his mark by setting the standard for new play development with his staged readings at the National Playwright's Conference. At Yale, he brought his innovative techniques to drama education, experimenting and introducing his students to new plays and ideas. In 1993, Richards was recognized with the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest honor for the arts.

crowns
celebrates fashion & faith

Lynda Gravatt, Lillias White, and Harriet D. Foy in Crowns. photo by T. Charles Erickson

regina taylor gets a nod from the AMEN corner

review by Charlene Cothran

You late, chile!" exclaimed Mother Katherine Taylor to a friend who recently presented her with the calendar version of Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry's book *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats.* The moment I saw the calendar 2 years ago, I knew I HAD to send it to her because she's a virtual twin to the woman on the cover. This only goes to prove that there's a Mother Taylor in every black [Baptist] Church. You know her . . . She proudly sits in the same spot, on the same pew every Sunday. Toes tapping out praise in spiked-healed paten-leather pumps and matching bag, dainty gloves and a Holy Ghost hanky spread across her lap. Her gorgeous silky brown skin is God-like and her perfectly rose colored lips are always perched with a hymn and testimony on the tip of her tongue. Oh, and, each and every Sunday she is crowned in one of her many fashionable hats.

Regina Taylor nostalgically gives homage to these women we all know and love. Her adaptation of *Crowns* for stage is an electrifying celebration of spirit, history, sorority and style.

Hats off to the casting director who lined up the very best in the business to bring us 90 minutes of sheer pride and joy. Complimenting each other in vocal and dramatic skill, are Lillias White (Velma), Ebony Jo-Ann (Mother Shaw), Janet Hubert (Wanda), Lynda Gravatt (Mabel), Carmen Ruby Floyd (Yolanda), Harriet D. Foy (Jeanette) and Lawrence Clayton (the man). Spirit-filled choreography by Ronald K. Brown keeps the revival moving as the characters musically and hilariously share memories, life lessons, and of course, 'the rules' for wearing a crown.

Flawless costumes by Emilio Sosa get a resounding 'AMEN' and the percussion by David Pleasant, who is excellent on tambourine and congos, is worthy of the highest praise. Now playing at Second Stage Theatre in New York City, call Walk Tall Girl Productions, Inc. at 718.919-5553 for group discount tickets.

"AN UPTOWN 'GUYS AND DOLLS!' A JAZZY MUSICAL BAUBLE WITH SASS AND CHARM! A HIGH-SPIRITED, MELODIC SCORE WITH TERRIFIC LYRICS. THE LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION IS THROUGH THE ROOF!" –Bruce Weber, The New York Times

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450 West 42nd Street

Celeste E. Beatty, chief executive officer of Harlem Brewing Co.

sugar hill golden ale

Launched to a New York and New Jersey public last summer, Harlem Brewing Co.'s Sugar Hill Golden Ale is microbrew ale described by *The New York Times* as "coppery-colored and fairly full-bodied but refreshing, with a nice hint of bitter orange in its finish."

"In some ways it's similar to the beer that the great kings and queens of Africa brewed," said Celeste E. Beatty, chief executive officer of the Black-owned business she founded in November 2000. The popularity of the brand in the Northeast region of the states has prompted interest in the product in other parts of the world. This fall, Sugar Hill Golden Ale will be available in Japan. In Washington, D.C., the National Democratic Club, a restaurant with private membership is interested in selling the beer to its customers.

Pete Arnold, general manager of the operation, described Sugar Hill Golden Ale as a "smooth, good-tasting product."

"And I'm not really crazy about a lot of microbrews," he said.

While passionate about running the Harlem Brewing Co., Beatty is more excited about re-establishing a legacy that started in Africa and breaking the stigma between Blacks and beer.

"I have a responsibility to reconnect [Blacks] to that heritage," she said. "[Africans] were, in fact, great brewers. And they did not brew malt liquor."

"I have a responsibility to reconnect [Blacks] to that heritage," she said. "[Africans] were, in fact, great brewers. And they did not brew malt liquor."

In the United States, Blacks are frequently associated with malt liquor, a drink that tends to contain, according to Beatty, unhealthy ingredients. Beatty notes that companies promoting such a product have targeted Blacks, especially in the advertisements.

Not only does the brewing business in the United States misrepresent Blacks, she said, but it also underrepresents the presence of Blacks or the ancient Africans' influence on brewing.

"You never hear about Blacks," she said.

Of course, there is the exception. Beatty said she was surprised to see a Black guy in a Sam Adams commercial some time ago.

—Jerry Daniels Jr.

Tanqueray
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milwaukee's finest

swank

words by Michael Andre Adams

Ask the average African American to share his or her perception of Milwaukee and the word segregation is bound to come up. However, before you miss, diss, or dismiss Milwaukee, here's the scoop on two fabulous restaurants owned by people of color.

Best described as a light eatery with an upscale appeal, Milwaukee's SWANK is posh, chic, and finger lickin' good on the real. The downtown delight opened just this past January. Founded by siblings Trevor and Kai Trimble and cousin Shannon Brown, it's more than a Black thing, it's a family affair.

The most requested items on the menu include sesame-crusted scallops served with a mango puree, salmon steak with Thai sauce, and the Shrimp Po' Boy Sandwich. The crab cakes burst apart with real—as opposed to imitation—crabmeat, less the doughy filler. The granddaddy of them all is The Grand Swank, a multitiered and towering Epicurean delight for the true seafood lover. It starts out with shrimp, muscles, and crab claws on top, ending with a tempura-like batter-fried shrimp, scallops, and calamari below. If you like crispy catfish, you'll love theirs. And by all means, hit the Flourless Chocolate Cake for dessert. Your waistline may not thank you, but your soul definitely will.

Delectable flourless chocolate cake with fresh mint garnish.

Getting There:

Swank is located at 628 N. Water St. in the heart of Milwaukee, WI Private rooms and catering available. Lunch: 11-2 p.m. (M-F), Dinner: 5-10 p.m. (M-Th) till midnight Fri & Sat. Average ticket $10/lunch, $20/dinner with beverage (excluding alcohol). 414/27-SWANK; www.swankeatery.com.

Owner Tevor Trimble

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[l-r] Blake Kimbrough-Curator, "Artist Showcase Series" of New York City; featured artists Otto Neals and Ann Tanksley [whose painting is display at left]; Melvin Marshall Curator and Executive Producer.

a lesson in marshall arts

Art Collector Challenges African Americans to Start Owning Their Own Culture

Melvin A. Marshall has a mission: To guide African Americans to better appreciate their rich visual artistic history. To this end, he has started a national art tour to introduce and enlighten the significant contributions that artists of African descent have made to our national, visual, artistic culture.

This year, Marshall, 36, has inaugurated his Artist Showcase Series in New York City. The exhibit he says "was a big success." The showcase is a traveling national art series that highlights significant accomplishments of five 20th century artists of African descent. The exhibit in New York City included important paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by master artists Ann Tanksley and Otto Neals, and works by contemporary artists Cheryl Warrick, Francks Francois Deceus, and Willie Torbert. Marshall plans to showcase additional artists as he travels to different cities around the country.

Consistent with Marshall's vision of educating the public, the showcase will provide an opportunity for collectors to learn about and better appreciate the contributions made by these visual artists to their cultural legacy. The show will continue to Los Angeles during the week of Nov. 3, 2002, and will stop in Chicago, San Francisco, Detroit, and Washington D.C., among other cities.

"I first started buying art when I left college in the late 1980s and have been collecting ever since," Marshall said. He adds that collecting art has been a history lesson on a part of his Black culture that seems to be largely ignored: "the importance of artists of African descent to the international art scene."

"In addition, I am just beginning to fully appreciate the significant contributions that many other artists have made and are currently making. One such man is the master artist, author, curator, and educator Dr. David C. Driskell." Driskell, Marshall explains, "is our national treasure in the art world. "He has received many prestigious accolades and awards, including the National Medal of the Arts from President Clinton, for a lifetime of excellence and achievement in the arts. "We have not properly documented the vast importance of Dr. Driskell's influence on the art world over the past 45 to 50 years." Driskell was also Marshall's honorary guest at the inaugural event.

But Marshall's personal history may be as fascinating as the many artists that he is so dedicated to teaching us about. He is a native of New Orleans, and moved with his family to the San Francisco Bay area at the age of 11. Upon graduating from a top college preparatory school, Marshall enrolled in the College of Chemistry at

> "African-American art [is] undervalued, certainly underappreciated and most likely a good investment."

the University of California at Berkeley. After spearheading a successful campaign to establish a credit union—the first of its kind for students and faculty at Berkeley—Marshall discovered that he had an interest and a talent for things financial. After college he headed for Wall Street for a career in finance, where he joined J.P. Morgan & Co. as a Foreign Currency Trader. As part of his duties, Marshall spent long stints working in Europe. Marshall was impressed with the quality and number of fine museums he visited in Europe, noting,

"The Europeans, it seemed to me, had such a high respect for art, and modern European masters such as Picasso garnered inspiration from the so-called 'primitive' art of Africa. When I thought about both Picasso's many forays to the Trocadero, the ethnological museum in Paris, as well as the fact that Europe recognized that jazz was an art form at a time when America viewed it as merely dissolute, I experienced an epiphany: African-American art [is] undervalued, certainly underappreciated and most likely a good investment."

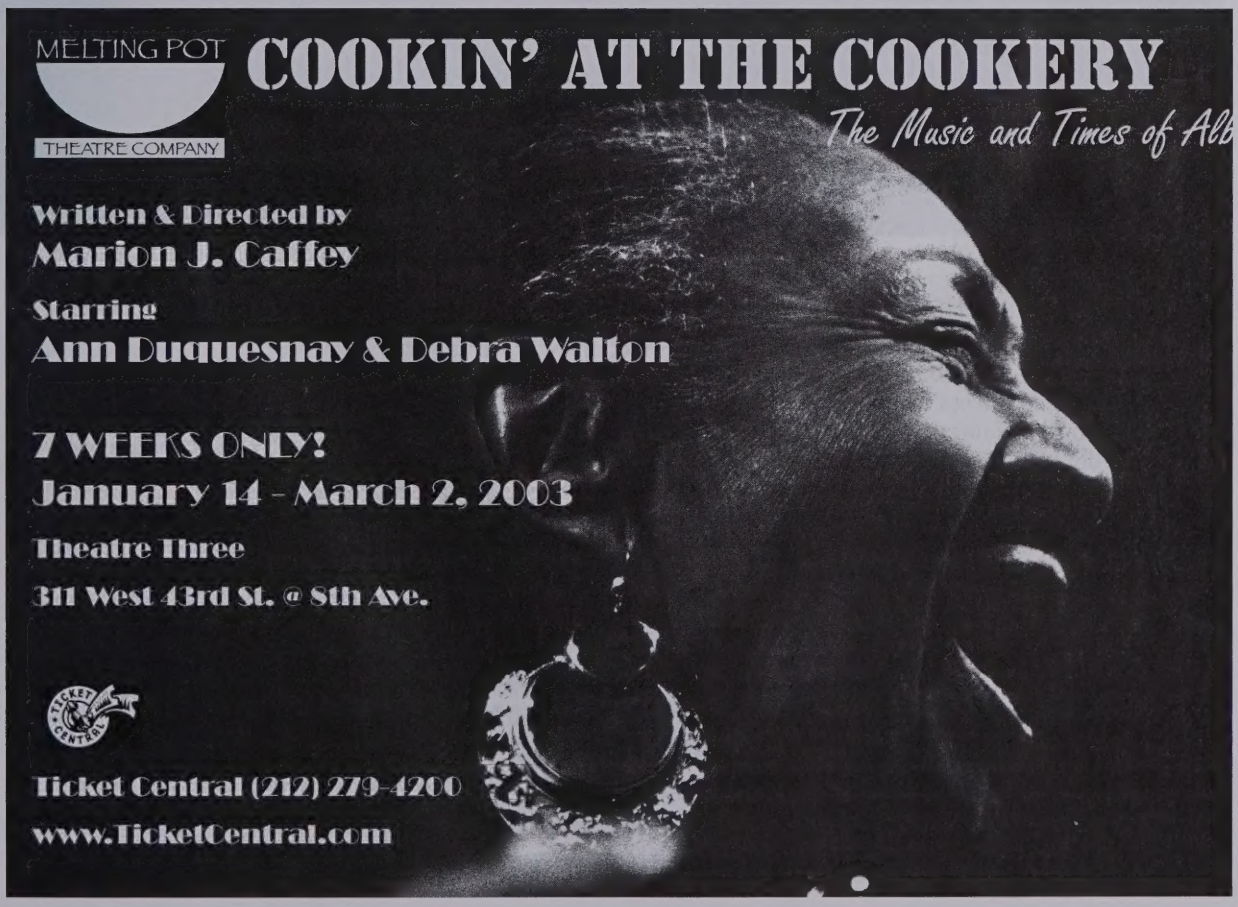
Marshall became an avid collector of African-American art, acquiring an impressive collection, which includes such masters as William H. Johnson, Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence. In a move that shocked his friends and family, Marshall left a burgeoning career on Wall Street in order to form two small companies, Marshall Arts, Ltd. and Hidden Heritage Productions, both of whose mission is to highlight the works of unknown, but important, African-American artists. Soon Marshall was lecturing at the Smithsonian and assisting his mentor, the late Thurlow Evans Tibbs Jr., in appraising art. Marshall and his business partner, Blake Kimbrough, catalogued the collection that Tibbs bequeathed to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., a vast collection containing 20,000 items representing over 600 artists.

Marshall is currently a museum curator and director on the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporian Arts (MoCADA) in Brooklyn, NY. He is very busy these days, acting as curator, lecturer and researcher. He is next co-curating an exhibit at MoCADA on the history of the African American master printmakers to open this fall.

He has also recently published an article in the International Review of African-American Art and is collaborating with the Hampton University Museum on a traveling museum exhibition featuring the works of Charles Sebree. Marshall has done ground-breaking research on Sebree and has discovered over 150 pieces of his artwork.

"Thornton Wilder discovered him; Gertrude Stein collected him; Pablo Picasso commented favorably on his work, and yet America knows very little about Charles Sebree, a man who helped to launch the careers of Harry Belafonte and Eartha Kitt and encouraged Toni Morrison to be a writer," Marshall lamented. "As the owner of his most significant work of the World War II era, I feel it is my duty to inform America about this unknown master."

For information on his upcoming traveling exhibit and art shows, please visit his Web site at www.MMFineArts.com.



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test your kitchen personality

Planning your dream kitchen? Take this quiz to help confirm your cooking needs and style preferences. Your score will serve as a guide to help you select appliances and kitchen designs that express you. Circle the letter that best describes your lifestyle.

When you entertain, you are most likely to:

A. Try a trendy recipe you've just read about.
B. Recreate a favorite recipe your mother used to make.
C. Create an entirely new recipe from scratch.

When eating out with friends, you are most likely to:

A. Enjoy an elegant meal in a gourmet restaurant.
B. Have burgers and malts at a '50s diner.
C. Find an off-the-beaten-path cafe that serves authentic Asian.

At gatherings, you generally like to:

A. Be the life of the party.
B. Work behind the scenes and then watch guests enjoy.
C. Be the official social director, bringing interesting people together.

When you cook for yourself, you're likely to:

A. Concoct tasty creations based on what you have on hand.
B. Make comfort food.
C. Try an elaborate recipe that you've never tried before.

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With the introduction of the Luxury Series, Jenn-Air now offers a complete line of built-in appli-cances for the first time. Coupled with a Pro-Style double wall oven and ProStyle cooktop, this delux look offers exactly what homeowners want . . . style and function!

When you shop for clothes, you are more likely to purchase:
A. The latest styles on the runways.
B. Classics that never go out of style.
C. Items and accessories to create unexpected combinations.

When you travel, you are most likely to choose:
A. A luxurious resort in a popular, exotic location.
B. A "See America" trip that includes tours of historic locations.
C. An adventure vacation, such as mountain climbing or rafting.

Your favorite colors are:
A. Classic, stylish neutrals.
B. Restful colors that make you feel cozy and comfortable.
C. Energizing colors that make you feel creative and alive.

You can't resist buying things that make you feel:
A. Stylish and sophisticated.
B. Efficient and practical.
C. Up-to-date on the latest technologies.

Which do you like most about yourself?
A. Your looks.
B. Your intelligence.
C. Your creativity.

You prefer to spend your free time:
A. With friends who appreciate your sense of style.
B. Relaxing at home with your family.
C. Meeting new people and exploring new places.

SCORING

If you answered mostly with the letter "A," you may have a contemporary kitchen personality. You enjoy the latest styles and trends. You enjoy the newest, most interesting foods. You enjoy surrounding yourself with people and things that reflect your unique sense of style. Your ideal kitchen would include a double wall oven and a sleek downdraft cooktop.

If you answered mostly with the letter "B," you may have a traditional kitchen personality. Your home is the center of your universe. You enjoy foods that evoke family traditions, and you also enjoy creating traditions of your own. You like to surround yourself with people and things that make you and your family feel a sense of warmth and comfort. Your dream kitchen could very well include a slide-in range or a new conventional gas cooktop.

If you answered mostly with the letter "C," you may have a stainless kitchen personality. You are a chef in the truest sense of the word. When it comes to cooking, you enjoy creating innovative new recipes that delight your guests. You like to try the untried, experiment with exotic new combinations and test your creativity. You want high-performance appliances with the latest technologies that enable you to do your best work. Some of your appliance favorites might be a dual-fuel range or a downdraft cooktop.

House Beautiful

Proud of the work you've done on your home? We're looking for black gay homeowners with fabulous interiors designs to feature in an upcoming issue. Email us at thecamp@venusmagazine.com.

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

The 20 Hottest Black icons & Why We Love Them

They turn it out. They turn us on. They serve on-camera and behind the scenes. They are icons for the Black gay community. In this issue, Venus highlights the careers of 20 public figures who are highly revered by Black gays and lesbians. While these icons are not gay, they all have made a special connection with our community through their work, words, and actions. So, as Venus salutes these icons, check out their stories, their claims to fame, and how they continue to turn heads.

words by Elyce Strong
edited by Michael K. Watts

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Oprah Winfrey

Claim to Fame Queen of Talk
Why We Love Her Because she recommends some great books. The country started reading again after her now-defunct Oprah's Book Club began in 1996. And because her magazine, *O*, is just the truth.
No She Didn't! Remain single all these years! Will she and Stedman ever get married? It has been 17 years, and we are just dying for the wedding of the century!
Yes She Did! Turn her post-show online gab-fest into a prime-time coda to her talk show called *Oprah After the Show* on the Oxygen cable network. The show fulfills her obligations as a partner in the network and allows her to retain her talk show master tapes, which she had previously relinquished.

Oprah spent her early years with her grandmother on a farm in Kosciusko, Miss., then with her mother in Milwaukee. She suffered abuse and molestation, so she was sent to live under her father's strict discipline in Nashville, which proved to be exactly what she needed. She attended Tennessee State University and began reporting at a local station in Nashville. She finally ended up in Chicago hosting WLS-TV's *AM Chicago*. A year later, it was the hottest show in town and in 1985 was renamed *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Oprah has received countless Daytime Emmy awards, and she has gone on to star in *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*, as well as produce film and television projects. Today, she is chairman of Harpo, Inc. and a modest billionaire. Oprah recently received the first-ever Bob Hope Humanitarian Award at the 54th Annual Emmy Awards. Her acceptance speech spoke volumes: "The guy on the street, the woman in the classroom, the Israeli, the Afghani, the Zuni, the Apache, the Irish, the Protestant, the Catholic, the gay, the straight, you, me—we all just want to know that we matter."

Maya Angelou

Claim to Fame One of the greatest writers of contemporary literature.
Why We Love Her Because inspiration flows like a river from her pen and her mouth. And she has a story for everything!
No She Didn't! Learn to speak five languages fluently: English, Spanish, French, Italian, and West African Fanti. (And some of us have trouble mastering the Queen's English!)
Yes She Did! Release her latest book this past spring, A Song Flung Up to Heaven, the sixth installment of her autobiography, which began over 30-years ago.

A true renaissance woman, Dr. Maya Angelou is a dancer, poet, educator, historian, author, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer, and director. Born Marguerite Johnson in 1928 in St. Louis, she spent most of her early years in rural Arkansas. After being raped by her mother's boyfriend at age 8, she did not speak for almost five years. At 16, she had her first child. These early events sparked her best-selling book, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, the first of her six-part autobiography. She has gone on to write a total of 10 books, numerous poems, including the well-known Phenomenal Woman, and many plays and essays. In 1993, President Clinton asked her to write and recite an original work for his inauguration, making her only the second poet in U.S. history to have such an honor. In 1998, she made her directing debut with Down In the Delta, starring Alfre Woodard. Last spring, Angelou debuted her own line of Hallmark greeting cards and gifts, Life Mosaic, giving fans a chance to use her words to touch and inspire each other.

R.J Capak/Wire Image

Whitney Houston

Claim to Fame Her soul-wrenching voice and her perfect pearly whites.
Why We Love Her There are no fronts, no airs. The ghetto-fabulous diva and down-ass chick will fight you in her Bob Mackey gown if she has to! And anyone who would call her husband her "baby daddy" in Carnegie Hall is alright with us!
No She Didn't! Record a song on her new album called "Whatcha Lookin' At," which dogs out the media for talking $&!# about her. Miss Thang, you betta read!
Yes She Did! Get Babyface, Dallas Austin, Irv Gotti, Tweet, and her "baby daddy" Bobby Brown to write/produce for her upcoming album. And the children will be the first in line when it comes out in December!

This model turned singer was born in Newark, N.J., into a musical family—gospel-singer-mom, Cissy Houston, and legendary singer-cousin Dionne Warwick. A Clive Davis prodigy, her debut album in 1985, *Whitney Houston*, went on to sell over 20 million copies. After two more successful solo albums, she ventured into film, starring in *The Bodyguard*. That soundtrack became one of the most successful soundtracks of all time. She continued her film career, starring in *Waiting to Exhale* and *The Preacher's Wife*. Houston has gone on to produce such movies as *Cinderella* and *The Princess Dairies* while still cranking out hit albums.

Michael Jackson

Claim to Fame King of Pop
Why We Love Him His glove, moonwalking, grabbing his crotch, saying, "Chamon." The list goes on and on.
No He Didn't! Accuse Tommy Mottola, chairman of Sony Music, of being a racist. Siting poor promotion of his *Invincible* album, Michael engaged in a heated dispute with his Sony label, Epic, earlier this year. Now, he is on a crusade to "heal" the music industry and protect the rights of recording artists. Alright! Michael the activist!
Yes He Did! Have a cameo in last summer's much-anticipated film, *Men in Black II*, playing Agent M. We had not seen Michael on the big-screen since *The Wiz*!

Born in Gary, In., Michael found himself leading his singing brothers in The Jackson Five by the time he was four. They became one of the biggest groups of the 1970s. In 1979, he released *Off The Wall*, earning him his first Grammy, three American Music Awards, and jump-starting his amazing solo career. In 1983, he released *Thriller*, which won eight Grammy awards, eight American Music Awards, and became the biggest-selling album of all time, selling more than 46 million copies worldwide.

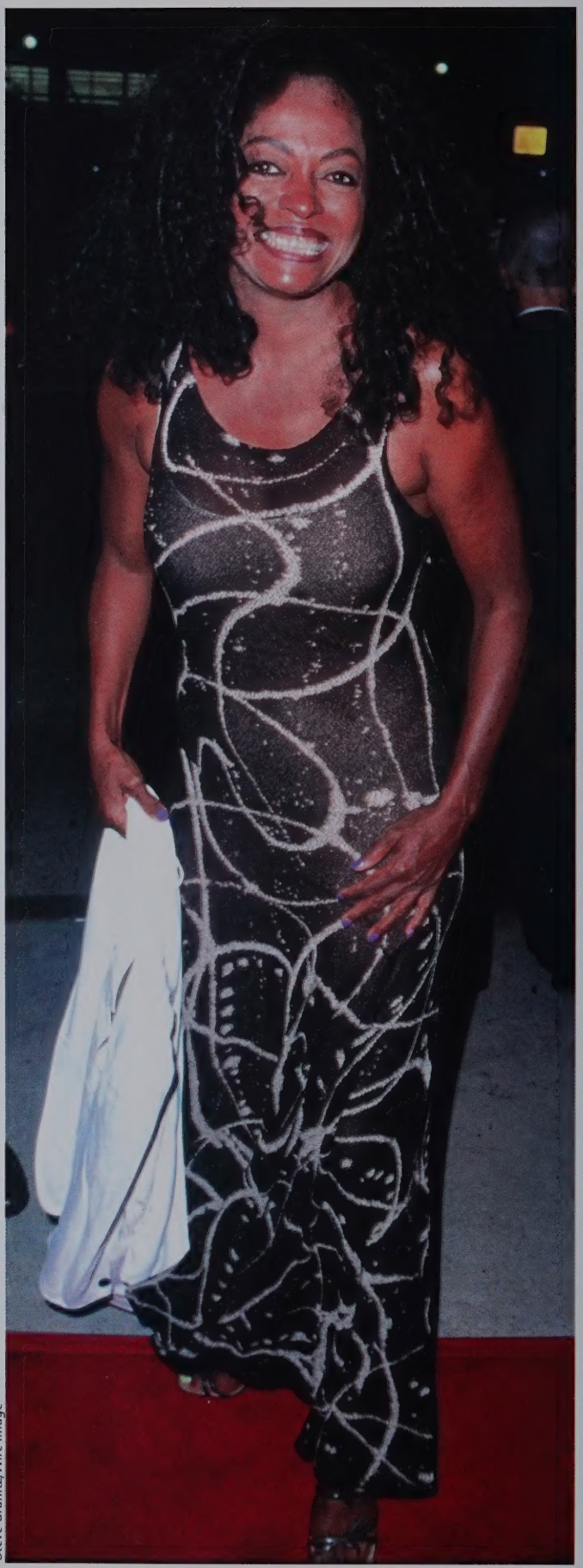
His next albums, *Bad* and *Dangerous* both achieved more than seven times platinum status, but Michael soon found himself in the news for other reasons. He married Lisa Marie Presley, divorced her, and remarried another woman whom he's had two children with. His latest album, *Invincible*, was released last year.

Michael Caulfield/Wire Image

Diana Ross

Claim to Fame She's the consummate diva with the big hair.
Why We Love Her 'Cause we all secretly want to be as much of a drama queen as she is! We live for her!
No She Didn't! Pat Lil' Kim's exposed breast on stage at the MTV Video Music Awards in 1999. Mother Supreme is sexy at 58 but would never wear anything like that!
Yes She Did! Enter a drug and alcohol rehab facility over the summer and got out in time to perform to sell-out crowds in Europe and the U.S. Grand diva!

Born Diane Ross in Detroit, the home of Motown Records, she was a founding member of The Supremes. After a long streak with no hits, the ladies hit No. 1 with "Where Did Our Love Go," and 11 more No.1s followed. In 1970, Diana went solo and almost simultaneously began her acting career. Her first two films were partially directed by Motown mogul Berry Gordy himself. Her film debut, Lady Sings The Blues, for which she got an Academy Award nomination, was followed by Mahogany and The Wiz. Two TV films, Out of Darkness and Double Platinum, would continue to show Diana's acting skills through the 1990s. Though Diana has never won a Grammy, her mantelpiece is overrun with all the other awards she's received. She has just published a coffee-table book of photos from her life and career entitled Diana Ross: Going Back.



Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Luther Vandross

Claim to Fame That sexy, sultry voice!
Why We Love Him Because he makes the best love-making music, no matter how much he weighs.
No He Didn't! Refuse to answer any media questions about his sexuality. He feels he does not owe his fans any details about his personal life, and frankly, it's none of anybody's business. Enough said.
Yes He Did! Release Luther Vandross last year. His J Records debut is a soulful album that epitomizes classic Luther, and he's been touring ever since.

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Born in the Bronx, N.Y., Vandross began his musical career by writing and performing jingles for television commercials. He got his big break when he met up with David Bowie and performed backup vocals as well as co-wrote a No. 1 hit on Bowie's 1975 album. Vandross then sang backup for such legends as Barbra Streisand, Carly Simon, and Donna Summer. He soon formed a group called Luther and released two albums, which received little attention. He even produced albums for Aretha Franklin. But his 1981 debut solo album, *Never Too Much*, officially put him on the map. He has had over 15 albums since then, many of them platinum. Vandross has won four Grammy awards and a host of other awards.

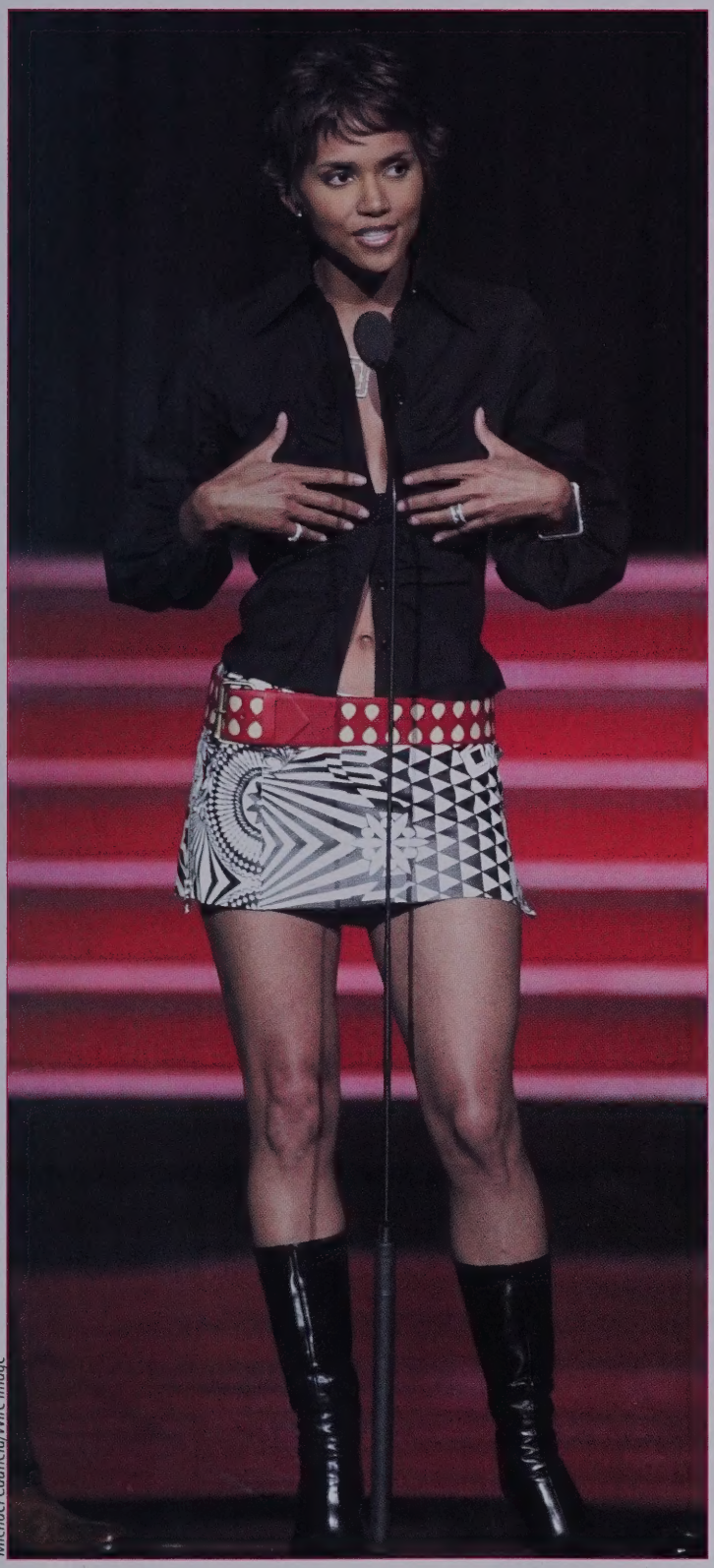
icons

Mary J. Blige

Claim to Fame Queen of Hip Hop Soul
Why We Love Her She sings from the heart. When she sings, "No more drama," you feel her, and you know she feels you!
No She Didn't! Tell us that she is engaged but refused to give us any details. Come on, Mary, what's the 411 on your man? Inquiring minds want to know! When's the wedding? Is he fine?
Yes She Did! Head back to the studio with P. Diddy to record her next album just a few weeks after ending her "No More Drama" tour in August. This will be the 10-year anniversary of their first collaboration, *What's the 411?*

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Mary J. was born in the Bronx, N.Y. in 1971 and began singing in her church choir at an early age. She made a demo when she was 17, and the rest is history. Sean "P. Diddy" Combs signed her to Uptown Records and perfected her sound on her debut 1992 album, *What's the 411?*, which sold over 2 million copies. A few years later, she released *My Life*, which earned her a Grammy nomination. She has released a total of five albums and received numerous accolades and awards. In 2000, the evolving Blige starred in the dramatic film *Prison Song*. In August, Mary released *Dance For Me*, her second remix album that has been blowing up in the clubs. Since then, she has begun work on her next album. And you can hear her on Hip-Hop artist Common's latest single "Come Close," and in R&B crooner Jaheim's music video for "Fabulous."



Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Halle Berry

Claim to Fame Award-winning actress and model
Why We Love Her Because her beauty is absolutely flawless, but she's not afraid to portray some of the tackiest, ugliest characters on film. Then, she can flip it and serve glamour for Revlon! Work!
No She Didn't! Marry the finest, sexiest man in neo-soul music, Eric Benet. Oooh, yes! That Eric is the answer!
Yes He Did! Become the first African American to win an Academy Award for Best Actress. And she just became the latest Bond girl, starring as Jinx in the upcoming *Die Another Day*. Trailblazing diva-actress for the new millennium!

Born in Cleveland, and named after Halle Brothers department store there, Berry first found herself competing in several beauty pageants. She won the Miss Teen All-American Beauty Pageant in 1985, and the next year became the first runner-up in the Miss USA Pageant. Halle began modeling, and in 1991 she got her big acting break playing a crackhead in Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*.

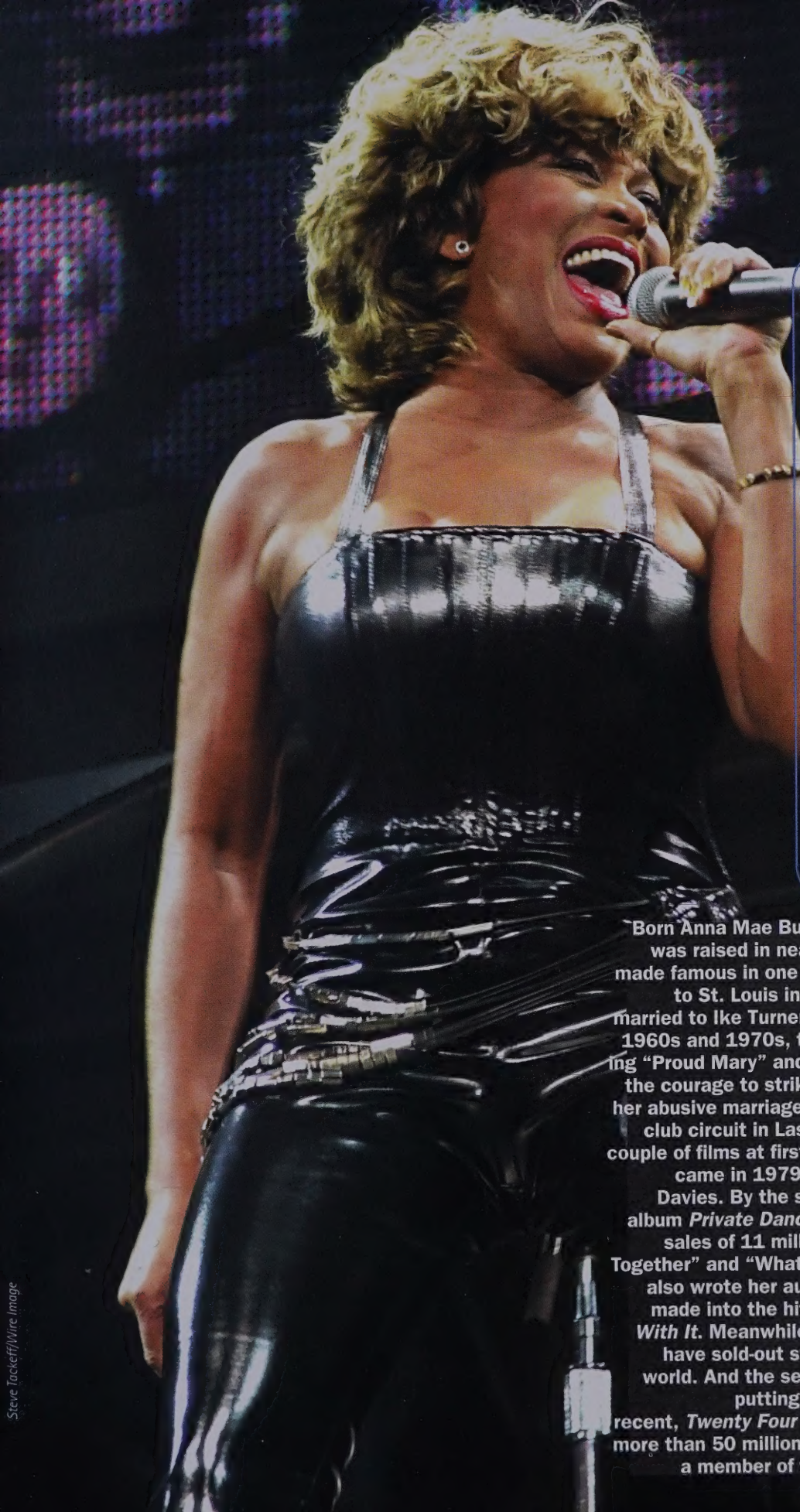
From there, she was cast in numerous movies, including *Boomerang*, *The Flintstones*, *Losing Isaiah*, *B.A.P.S.*, *Bulworth* and *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*. But she still did not get the respect she deserved in Hollywood. That all changed when she portrayed her own personal idol, Dorothy Dandridge, in the HBO movie, *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*. Films like *X-Men* and *Swordfish* would follow as she continued fulfilling her spokesmodel duties for Revlon. Berry received a Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award, both for Best Actress for her outstanding performance in Monster's Ball. Berry is currently filming *X-Men 2* in Vancouver for a next summer release, and she will produce a remake of *Foxy Brown*.

Angela Bassett

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Claim to Fame Award-winning actress
Why We Love Her Because she pours her soul into her performances like no other actress in Hollywood can. And check out her new look! Go, girl!
No She Didn't! Get the whole world riled up with her explanation for turning down the Oscar-winning role Halle Berry plays in Monster's Ball. While Bassett praised Berry's performance, she said the role simply was not for her. Miss Angela, do you! We ain't mad atcha!
Yes She Did! Win this year's Lena Horne Award for Outstanding Career Achievements in the Field of Entertainment at the recent Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards.

Bassett first got bit by the acting bug when she went to Washington, D.C., on a school field trip and attended a production of *Of Mice and Men*. She ended up studying Afro-American Studies at Yale University, then went on to earn a Master's Degree from its prestigious Drama School. Her big break came when John Singleton cast her as Cuba Gooding, Jr.'s mother in *Boyz N the Hood*. From there, she played opposite Denzel Washington in *Malcolm X*, then opposite Laurence Fishburne in *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Her portrayal of Tina Turner garnered her a Golden Globe Award and an Oscar nomination. Other movies to her credit include *Waiting to Exhale*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *The Score* and this year's *Sunshine State* and *The Rosa Parks Story*, which garnered her an Emmy nomination. She has received countless awards, including several NAACP Image Awards. Angela stars opposite Jeff Bridges, Penelope Cruz, Ed Harris, and Jessica Lange in *Masked* and *Anonymous*, due out next year.



Steve Tackeff/Wire Image

Tina Turner

Claim to Fame The hardest working legs in show business and that piercing, powerful voice

Why We Love Her Because she endured abuse, courageously escaped and built a new career for herself, never looking back. If Tina can do that, we can do anything!

No She Didn't! Announce that her sold out Twenty Four Seven Tour in 2000 would be her last. Tina, come on, please roll down the river just one mo' time!

Yes He Did! Show up at the Giorgio Armani Spring 2003 Fashion Show in Milan last month sporting a new hairdo and still-flawless skin. Any woman who can serve like Tina at the age of 62 deserves a standing ovation! Show her some respect!

Born Anna Mae Bullock in Brownsville, Tenn., she was raised in nearby Nutbush, a small town she made famous in one of her songs. Anna Mae moved to St. Louis in 1956, and two years later was married to Ike Turner and singing in his band. In the 1960s and 1970s, they had a string of hits, including "Proud Mary" and "A Fool In Love." Turner found the courage to strike out on her own in 1976 once her abusive marriage ended. She worked the supper club circuit in Las Vegas and got small roles in a couple of films at first. Then Turner's second chance came in 1979, when she met manager Roger Davies. By the summer of 1984, her comeback album *Private Dancer* was on its way to worldwide sales of 11 million, led by the hits, "Let's Stay Together" and "What's Love Got To Do With It." She also wrote her autobiography, *I, Tina*, which was made into the hit biopic, *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Meanwhile, Tina's explosive stage shows have sold-out stadiums and arenas all over the world. And the seven-time Grammy winner is still putting out albums, including her most recent, *Twenty Four Seven*. To date, Turner has sold more than 50 million albums worldwide. She is also a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Janet Jackson

Claim to Fame Her classic R&B and pop hits and spectacular, electrifying stage shows.

Why We Love Her Miss Jackson has the best six-pack around. And by the gear she sports, she knows it. And the dance moves! She's not just Michael's little sister anymore.

No She Didn't! Reportedly date Matthew McConaughey, Jermaine Dupri, and *NSYNC's Justin Timberlake all in a six-month period. We have heard Janet speak of her "size" requirements in her men; does this mean that they ALL comply? Mmm...

Yes She Did! Recently team up with reggae hip-hopper Beenie Man for "Feel It Boy," the first single from his latest album, *Tropical Storm*. The single is already a hit and shooting up the charts. Do your thing, girl!

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

This 36-year-old sultry, singing diva was born in Gary, In., with the last name Jackson, so her career was almost chosen for her. As a teenager, she released two albums that were moderate successes. Then came *Control*, which skyrocketed her to super-stardom. Three years later, she won her first Grammy with the release of *Rhythm Nation 1814*. Her next two albums, *Janet.* and *The Velvet Rope*, both went multiplatinum, and her latest album *All For You* debuted at No.1 on Billboard's Hot 100 Chart. Her acting career began at age 7 when she strutted out on the Merv Griffin Show. Janet went on to star in TV shows *Good Times*, *Diff'rent Strokes*, and *Fame*, and in movies *Poetic Justice* and *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps*. She also recently made her second concert appearance on HBO with *Janet—Live in Hawaii*, which was the No. 1 DVD for several weeks after its September release. Janet also collaborated with Justin Timberlake on a song on his upcoming solo album entitled *(And She Said) Take Me Now*. She also recently wrote and recorded a song for Miramax's upcoming film Chicago.

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Patti Labelle

icons

Claim to Fame Her powerful voice that shows no mercy, and her wild, flamboyant hairstyles.

Why We Love Her Because she publicly shows her love for gays and lesbians. And all the children go up when she kicks off her shoes and rolls across the floor on stage. We feel ya, girl!

No She Didn't! Disappoint some fans by showing up late to an Los Angeles show and then using precious performance time to explain why. She had gone to visit a dear friend in the hospital and felt compelled to share the situation throughout the show. We understand, Patti! Just sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and we will be just fine!

Yes She Did! Perform "Lady Marmalade" with Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya, and Pink, and still maintained her title as the Queen of Onstage Hollering. Christina can "sang," but trust, Patti can blow them all away!

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1944, Patti grew up running track, singing in the glee club and acting in high school plays, but she enjoyed singing the most. In the 1960s, she led the superstar girl group Patti LaBelle and the Bluebells. In the 1970s, there was LaBelle, and in the 1980s, there was just Patti LaBelle. With both groups, she had moderate success, including the 1975 #1 hit, "Lady Marmalade," but Patti became a household name as a solo artist, with hits like "New Attitude" and "On My Own." Patti got back into the acting, having her own TV sitcom Out All Night and a recurring role on A Different World. Patti even released a cookbook and a motivational book in the past two years. Her most recent album, When a Woman Loves, was released in 2000. Last year, Patti was awarded the Lena Horne Award for Outstanding Career Achievement at the Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards. This year found Patti showing of her Philadelphia home on MTV's Cribs, and playing the mother of Destiny's Child member Kelly Rowland in the music video for Rowland's duet with Nelly, "Dilemma."

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Claim to Fame His inspiring blend of hip-hop and contemporary and traditional gospel.

Why We Love Him Because he can make us get our groove on and praise the Lord at the same time. Can we get a witness?

No He Didn't! Change the name of his group at least twice? First, it was The Family. Then, it became God's Property. Next, there was Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation. What's up, Kirk? Does God keep telling you to change it?

Yes He Did! Release his latest album, *The Rebirth of Kirk Franklin*, which topped the Billboard Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Album chart earlier this year and was certified Gold.

Kirk Franklin

Franklin was born in Fort Worth, Texas, and raised by an older aunt. He was playing the piano by age 4 and was offered a recording contract by age 7. His aunt turned the contract down, but Franklin kept playing music. At age 11, he was appointed the Minister of Music at his church. It was then that he began to write and arrange music. By 1993, Franklin was being offered recording contracts again, and he finally chose a label, GospoCentric. Later that year, he released his first album, Kirk Franklin and the Family, and it put Kirk on the map. *Whatcha Lookin' 4* was released a few years later, earning Kirk his first Grammy. In July of 1997, *Stomp* was released, becoming a hit on both the gospel, pop, and R&B charts. Currently, Kirk is promoting his latest album on the Hopeville Tour with Yolanda Adams and Donnie McClurkin.

Pastor Shirley Caesar

Claim to Fame Queen of Gospel

Why We Love Her Because she practices what she preaches. And some of her music makes for fierce house remixes! Honey, "hold my mule" while I testify on the dance floor!

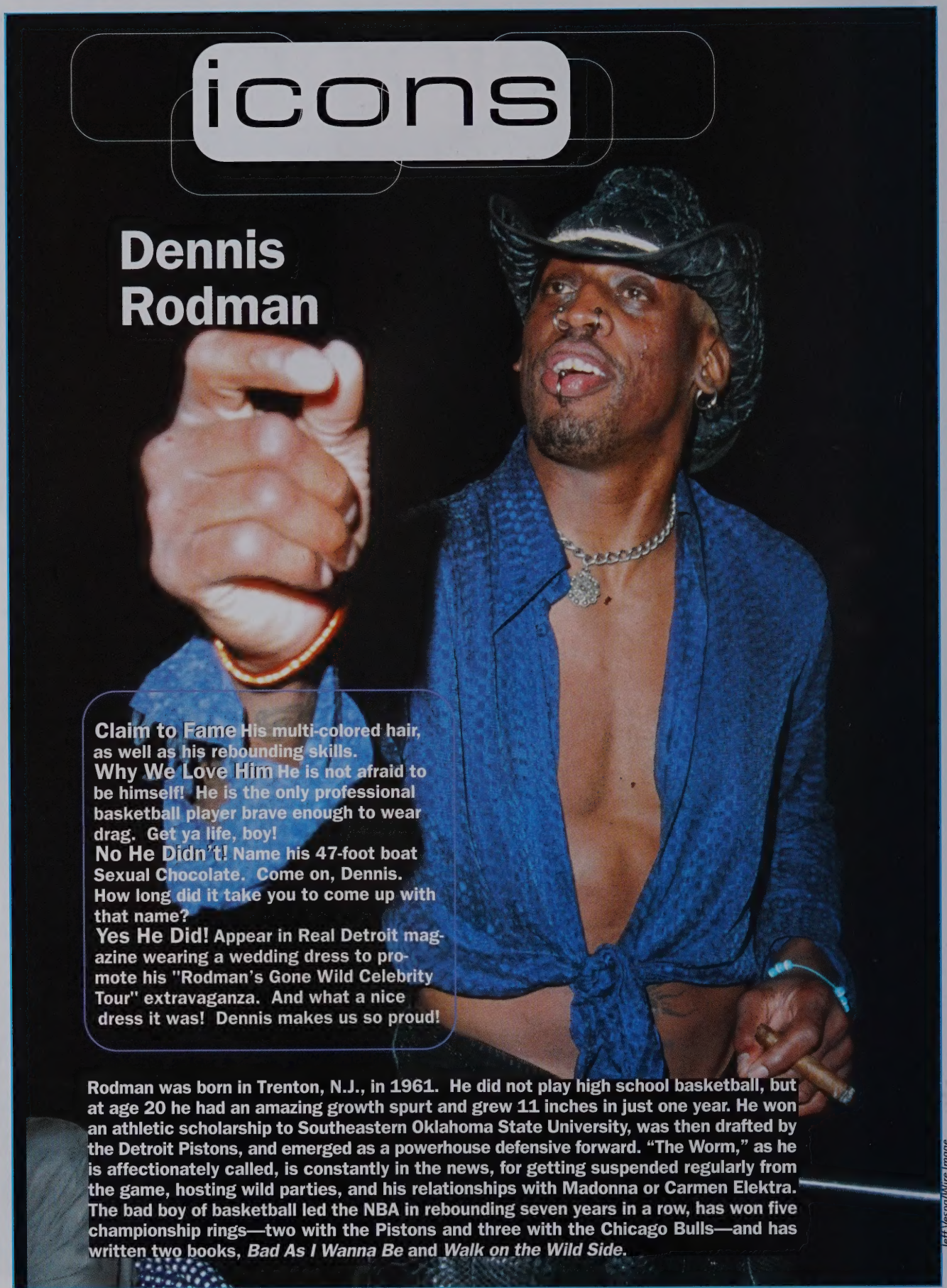
No She Didn't! Graduate magna cum laude with a B.A. in Business Marketing, despite high school teachers telling her she was not college material. And she has received numerous honorary doctorates from other universities, as well. Don't mess with a highly favored Christian with credentials!

Yes She Did! Last year, she released her 35th album, *You Can Make It*, a lively mixture of Gospel, Soul, and a little R&B.

Pastor Shirley Caesar has been in the ministry for over 40 years, and singing even longer. Born in Durham, N.C., her father died when she was 8, and she found herself taking care of her semi-invalid mother and her siblings. After graduating from college, she began her professional singing career. Within a decade Caesar became the second African-American woman to win a Grammy for a gospel performance, following in the footsteps of the legendary Mahalia Jackson. Pastor Caesar has had a stunning musical career with 10 Grammy Awards, 12 Stellar Awards, and 17 Dove Awards to her credits.

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Dennis Rodman



Claim to Fame His multi-colored hair, as well as his rebounding skills.

Why We Love Him He is not afraid to be himself! He is the only professional basketball player brave enough to wear drag. Get ya life, boy!

No He Didn't! Name his 47-foot boat Sexual Chocolate. Come on, Dennis. How long did it take you to come up with that name?

Yes He Did! Appear in Real Detroit magazine wearing a wedding dress to promote his "Rodman's Gone Wild Celebrity Tour" extravaganza. And what a nice dress it was! Dennis makes us so proud!

Rodman was born in Trenton, N.J., in 1961. He did not play high school basketball, but at age 20 he had an amazing growth spurt and grew 11 inches in just one year. He won an athletic scholarship to Southeastern Oklahoma State University, was then drafted by the Detroit Pistons, and emerged as a powerhouse defensive forward. "The Worm," as he is affectionately called, is constantly in the news, for getting suspended regularly from the game, hosting wild parties, and his relationships with Madonna or Carmen Elektra. The bad boy of basketball led the NBA in rebounding seven years in a row, has won five championship rings—two with the Pistons and three with the Chicago Bulls—and has written two books, *Bad As I Wanna Be* and *Walk on the Wild Side*.

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Claim to Fame Her androgynous persona and her sharp-cut hairstyles

Why We Love Her She is 50 years-old, and her body still looks tight. She's the ultimate dominatrix-sex kitten.

No She Didn't! Date a host of renaissance men in her life, including Dolph Lundgren. In 1996, she married a man 21 years her junior, her bodyguard, Atila Altaunbay. Alright, Miss Thang!

Yes She Did! Receive the honor as one of the VH-1's 100 Greatest Women of Rock and Roll. She is currently working on her latest album, and recently recorded tracks with rap-diva Lil' Kim.

Grace Jones

Born in Spanishtown, Jamaica, the 6-foot diva studied theater at Syracuse University, then gained notoriety as a top fashion model and actress in Italian movies. In 1977, she was offered a recording contract, which produced her first hit, "I Need a Man." She made a few more successful albums, most notably 1981's *Nightclubbing*, which produced the hit "Pull Up to the Bumper." Grace's infamous '"*A One Man Show* was filmed for the big screen in 1981. She co-starred in a few small movies but got her big film break in 1984 opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Conan the Destroyer*. Her return to recording brought the 1985 hit, "Slave to the Rhythm," then with *Nipple To The Bottle* and The Apple Stretching. She continued putting out the albums and the movies, including 1985's *A View to A Kill* and 1992's *Boomerang*. Recently, she ventured back onto the stage, performing in *Celebration of the Lizard* with Billy Zane.

Jeff Vespa/wireImage

Jennifer Holliday

YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME !

words by Michael K. Watts

Jennifer Holliday touches my soul." That's one diehard gay fan's explanation of why the Broadway diva is an icon in the eyes and hearts of thousands of gays and lesbians. Back when she won the 1982 Tony Award for her portrayal of Effie "Melody" White in "Dreamgirls," Holliday, 42, says her undesirable size and the painful subjects in her songs drew gay and lesbian audiences to her. Twenty years later, gays and lesbians are an audience she owes a great deal.

"[Gays and lesbians] supported me throughout a time when no one else would. Not church people, not anybody," Holliday revealed about the lean times in her career. "Being able to sing at three or four o'clock in the morning at gay clubs paid not only my house note but supported my family."

"Being able to sing at four in the morning at gay clubs paid not only my house note but supported my family."

Holliday's fans support her seemingly unconditionally—through the triumphs and the drama! She's definitely had her share of drama, especially with her "Dreamgirls" co-star Sheryl Lee Ralph. By the time "Dreamgirls" opened on Broadway, Holliday says the musical had become much less of the star vehicle that Ralph had wanted for herself, causing a bitter relationship between these leading ladies for years to come. "Sheryl Lee and I put our battle swords down about eight years ago," said Holliday setting the record straight. She says the hateful animosity between the Broadway divas is no more, and they are in touch from time to time.

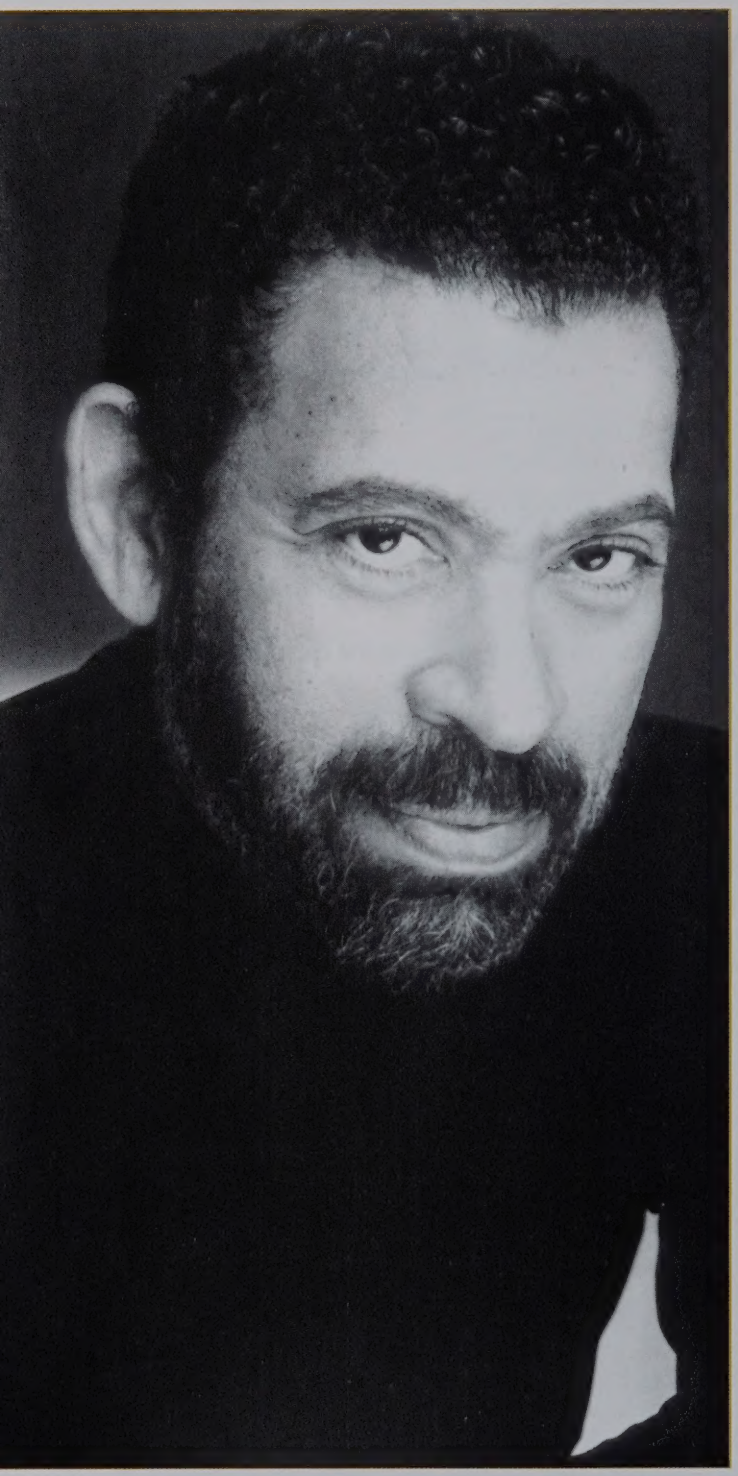
Today, the two-time Grammy Award-winning powerhouse performs regularly at gay pride celebrations and charity benefits across the country. But to hear Holliday's high-power dance hits like "No Frills Love," "Just Let Me Wait," and 1999's "Think It Over," fans will have to request them these days. "I'm just not as comfortable singing uptempo [songs] as I am singing ballads," admitted the chanteuse, referring to her bone-chilling slow-jams like "I Am Love" and "Say You Love Me."

When Holliday is not performing, she is maintaining her vegetarian diet, sailing or enjoying a game of Scrabble with friends in her New York City home. And, she's got a new man in her life! "I'm very much in love," Holliday revealed ecstatically of her beau of a year and a half.

Holliday began singing in the church choir at age 9 in her native Houston, Texas. At the ripe age of 18, she got an audition with the Broadway smash "Your Arms Too Short to Box with God," and she was hired for the lead role the same day. "Dreamgirls" would follow, producing her number one, Grammy Award-winning torch-ballad "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going." Several albums, hits and misses later, Holliday celebrated a dramatic weight loss with 1991's R&B hit "I'm On Your Side." But years of unhappiness came to a head in the mid-1990s as she battled and successfully overcame a severe bout of depression. In 1996, a recurring role on FOX's "Ally McBeal" reestablished her with mainstream audiences.

"Dreamgirls" was revived on tour in 1994 and again in July of this year during the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. In October, she celebrated her birthday by performing a benefit concert in New York City entitled "Romance in the Dark" in tribute to the great African American Broadway musicals. The event raised money for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. "I'm trying to bring some attention back to African American theatre which right now seems like it has somehow disappeared," Holliday said, "we should be on Broadway every year without question." On the big screen, she's belting out the blues and a little gospel in the recent film "The Rising Place" which stars Elise Neal.

Whether stage or screen, Holliday's gay and lesbian fans will always be right there, singing along and giving her glory.



Maurice Hines

ONE OF THE LAST LINKS TO THE OLD GLITTER IS STILL CARRYING ON

words by Stanley Bennett Clay

I called Lena Horne recently when my CD came out—and you know if she likes you because she curses—so I had sent my CD to her, and I hadn't heard from her. So I called from Chicago just to wish her Merry Christmas. Carl Craig answers the phone, and she hears my voice over the speaker. She calls out to Craig, 'By the way. . . .I heard the CD.' So I'm getting nervous because Lena will tell you the truth. Then she says: 'Tell that little mothafucka he can sing!'"

With parts of six decades performing and hanging with some of the greats under his belt, Maurice Hines has plenty of these stories to tell about a golden age of showbiz that is all but gone save for the link he represents.

Maurice started his professional dancing career in 1954 at the age of 7. Partnered with his 5-year-old brother Gregory, the Hines kids, as they were known back then, were spotted by Dinah Washington and immediately hired to open for Ruth Brown at The Apollo Theater. Before they reached high school, they had traveled the world and had shared the stage with such legends as Count Basie, Judy Garland, and Ella Fitzgerald, to name a few. Such stars as Don Rickles and the late comedienne Totie Fields shunned them, fearful of the thunderous applause and standing ovations the pubescent opening act received everywhere they performed.

Over the years Gregory gravitated toward Hollywood while Maurice held on to his classic jazz, tap, nightclub ,and Broadway roots. If some believe Maurice is not on celebrity par with his brother, he is not bothered. On the contrary, he is quite proud of his younger brother and quite proud of his own stellar accomplishments. This year alone the veteran entertainer has been very busy: he starred in the national touring company of Guys & Dolls; his CD, Maurice: I've Never Been In Love Before, an impeccably nuanced collection of jazz, standards and show tunes was re-released by Arbors Records; and his life story was commissioned for publication.

> "I just want it to be said that I was a good person who did the right thing, especially for my people. There have been opportunities to further my career by doing the wrong thing with regard to my people. But I was never about that."

Also this year, Maurice stepped behind the camera to direct his first film, a whodunit featuring gay detectives. "It ain't no low budget, it's no budget," he laughs. "All my friends are doing it for nothing. When we sell it, then everybody'll get paid. We're all looking out for each other."

Though Maurice is venturing into film, this die-hard New York native has no Hollywood desires and little faith in the Hollywood system. "I'm just doing this one movie," he says. "I don't think of myself as having a film career at all because I don't really like doing them. This happens to be a story I have to tell, and this has been in my life and in my world for the last nine years. I waited for Hollywood to do it and they weren't courageous enough, so I'm doing it myself.

"I don't see that much of a change in Hollywood. I think that some people will get the opportunity if they know how to play their role politically and keep their mouths shut about what's going on, because the bigger you get and the more things you accumulate, the more difficult it is for you to speak out." For Maurice Hines, however, not speaking out is not an option.

"I'm doing shows outside of America. I'm doing one in The Dominican Republic, I'm doing one in Cuba, and I'm doing one in Amsterdam. I wanted a worldwide career because I knew, since I was so political, that they would try to stop me in this country. I think we have a tendency to forget what devastates us as a people when something good happens for us like Halle Berry winning. We forget that Eartha Kitt was banned here in this country for 10 years [for reducing then first lady Ladybird Johnson to tears in The White House when Kitt expressed her strong opposition to the Vietnam War.] And if she didn't have an international career, she would be homeless. We forget what happens to us. I don't forget because they are the people that inspire methe Eartha Kitts, the Lena Hornes."

If anything has put a damper on Maurice's indomitable spirit, it would be the loss of his mother two years ago. It was Alma Hines, a shy and gentle woman who was not supposed to have children, who became, in her own words, "a cage of apes" when it came to her miracle sons. It was she who lovingly guided Maurice's and Gregory's careers from childhood to middle age.

"When I was getting ready to do my CD, I was practicing at my mother's house," Maurice recalls with a bittersweetness, "and she said, 'what's that thing you're doing with your voice?' And I said,'You mean 'riffing,' mother?' And she said 'yeah.' Then she said, 'you don't have any. Do the songs you know. You don't have no riffs. You know who your favorite singer is, Nat King Cole. You don't have to be him, but do his songs. Do his songs for your mother.' That's why there's so much love in it because I did it for my mother. Then the record company heard it and asked who was it, and when my manager told them it was me, they were shocked. They said, 'You mean Maurice Hines, the dancer, can sing like that?' So they immediately signed me. It was all a happy accident, engineered by my mother from the heavens.

"Losing [my mother] was very devastating to me and my brother. I just got an award from the Dance Educators of America for Lifetime

Continued on page 76

Dee Dee Bridgewater

A JAZZ ICON STEPS INTO A 'NEW' SPACE

words by G. B. Mann

Dee Dee Bridgewater. Picture the little girl trotted out by her mother to sing for guests. "Sing, baby." That's her. According to Bridgewater, she did so with gusto, never shying away. "From that young age, I always knew that I wanted to be a singing star," Bridgewater beamed. And how bright she shines.

After living in Paris for several years, she now calls Las Vegas home. That's where Venus caught up with her. Amid the intermittent clatter of workmen doing various renovations and repairs, we managed to get downright cozy. "Call me Dee Dee, please," she humbly requested.

continued on page 77

Dionne Warwick

40 YEARS, 60 ALBUMS & MORE TO COME

words by Michael K. Watts

Celebrating 40 years in the music business this year, legendary entertainer Dionne Warwick has given the world timeless songs and a lifetime of musical memories. It's amazing to ponder that Warwick has been saying a "little prayer," asking the "way to San Jose," and walking "on by" for 40 of her 61 years. But her numbers don't stop there.

Over 50 hit singles—two No. 1 hits and 12 Top 10 hits. 60 albums—one certified platinum and five certified gold. Five Grammy Awards and millions of loyal fans across the globe. How does she deliver so consistently? "Staying true to the people who have supported this career for this long," Warwick humbly explained, "and giving them hopefully what they are expecting of me. That's the secret."

A mother of two sons and a grandmother of five, Warwick's roots are firmly planted in her singing family, with sister Dee Dee Warwick and cousins Whitney Houston, Cissy Houston, and Leontyne Price. While studying at the Hartt College of Music, she regularly moonlighted as a session singer. Her weekends and holidays were often spent in New York, where she met award-winning songwriting duo Burt Bacharach and Hal David. Their graduation gift to her was her first hit, "Don't Make Me Over" in 1962. Together, they collaborated on a string of hits over the next ten years, including "Walk On By," "Message to Michael," "Alfie," and "The Windows of the World." "The music that Bacharach, David, and Warwick made will outlive all of us because they represent not only the fabric of our lives but so many lives," Warwick pointed out. And the hits, gold records, and awards just kept coming.

Dubbed "the voice that bridged the gap," Warwick is considered a pioneer as one of the first artists to cross over and appeal to mainstream audiences. Songs like "I Say a Little Prayer" and the Grammy Award-winning "Do You Know the Way to San Jose" remain indelibly stamped in the hearts of her fans today. Some of Warwick's more famous fans have remade her songs and made them their own, as in Luther Vandross' "A House is Not a Home."

Speaking of homes, the Dionne Warwick Design Group has designed commercial and residential spaces for the world's elite, including Warwick's own home in Brazil. "It's my stress-free country. It's just where I need to be right now," Warwick serenely offered. She splits her time between Brazil and her native New Jersey where her mother still lives.

Warwick has been highly recognized as a constant force in the entertainment industry: hosting the hit TV show *Solid Gold* in the 1980s; participating in the unprecedented "We Are the World" and "That's What Friends Are For" benefit recordings; and completing a successful stint as host of the Psychic Friends Network. Often unnoticed are Warwick's dedicated humanitarian efforts for many causes, including the fight against AIDS. "I've been given so much [that] I find it very easy to give back," the gracious Warwick said.

In the future Warwick will be required to give even more of her time to charitable organizations to satisfy an agreement that kept her out of jail. On May 12 of this year, Warwick was arrested at the Miami International Airport and charged for possession of less than 5 grams of marijuana. "Entertainers are sometimes placed in vulnerable situations which are completely beyond their control. To this day, I am still puzzled as to what happened to me in the Miami Airport," Warwick said in a statement to the press. Charges were later dropped in exchange for a charitable donation and participation in anti-drug announcements. Warwick also agreed to complete a drug treatment program.

Meanwhile, big plans are under way for Warwick to commemorate her 40 years in a 40-song duets album entitled *My Friends and Me* due this fall. She's brought in the best in the business—Luther Vandross, Roberta Flack, James Ingram—to recreate the magic of songs that have touched so many for 40 years.

Power of the Pitch

Film Writer Maisha Yearwood has Hollywood in the Palm of Her Hand

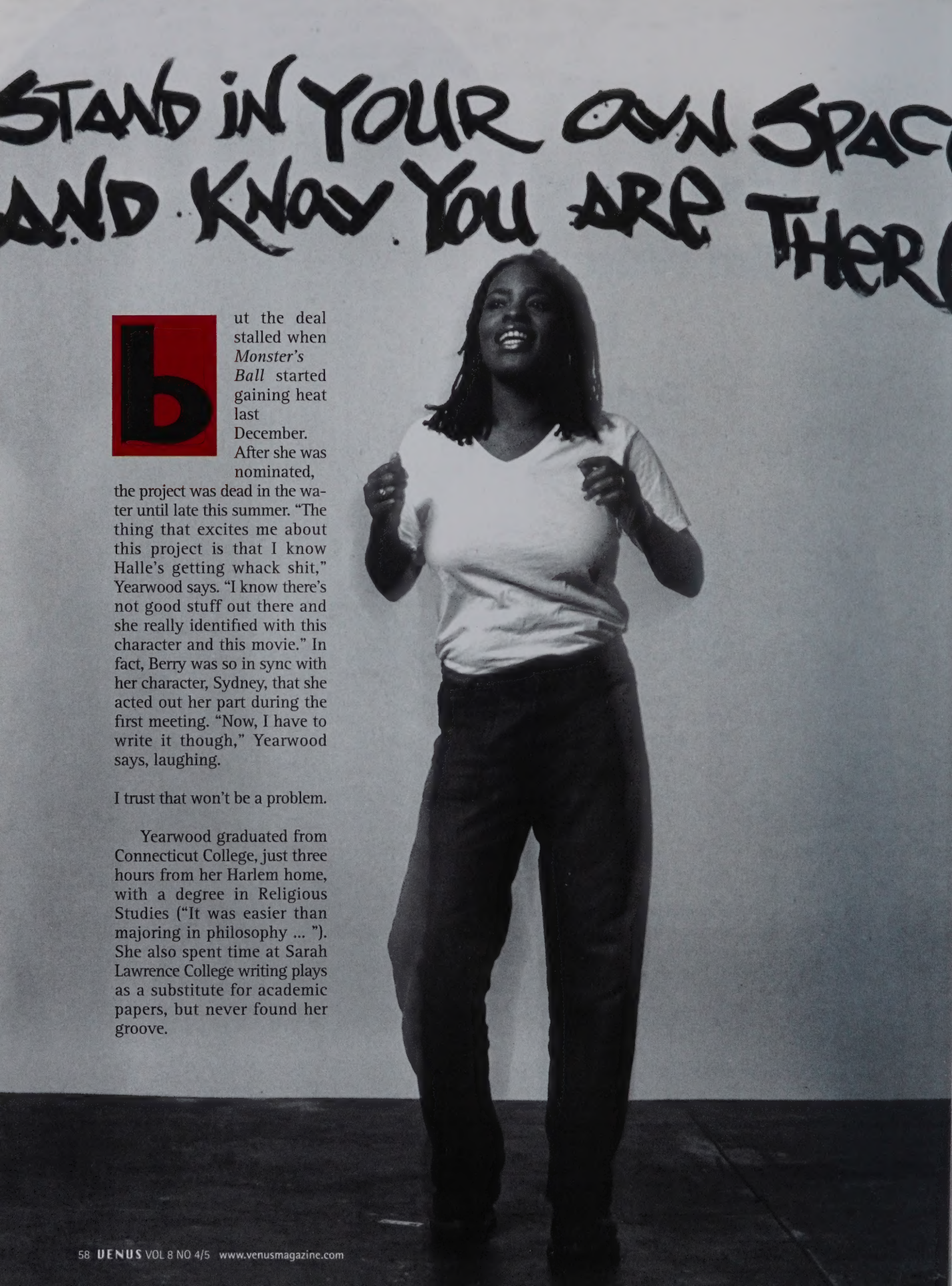
words by Anderson Jones

I'm not sure, but I have a feeling I don't have Maisha Yearwood's complete attention.

It's not that she isn't maintaining eye contact, laughing at my lame jokes or answering my questions thoroughly and with a frankness uncommon among most Hollywood industry types, she's just ... distracted. Every once and a while I catch her eyes darting past me, but I'm afraid to follow her gaze. I pretend not to notice. Instead, I learn quickly that the 29-year-old woman with natural dreds tickling the tops of her shoulders covered with a bright red California T-shirt, is uncommon.

Less than four years after leaving AFI's Film School, Yearwood shares a tiny table with me at the Silverlake java joint, The Coffee Table. She's already sold three sitcom ideas, a movie of the week, and three feature films—all on the strength of her legendary pitches. "I try to make them see the movie," she says of her 30-minute performance pieces. "It's almost like telling one long joke." Her first feature film to sell, a raucous, modestly budgeted comedy called *Where's the Party At?*, which follows an out-of-control bachelorette party, found a home at Artisan and Ice Cube's production house, Cubevision. News of her deal with Artisan broke in *Variety*, the daily industry bible, on her last day as a temp at Disney, where she passed the time checking DVDs for flaws. "And the moment that article came out," Yearwood recalls, "no one ever treated me the same again. You could see they weren't looking at me the same way." By the end of the day, her colleagues were feting her new fame with champagne and cake. "It was wild," Yearwood laughs. "I was like damn, no one wanted to talk to me before."

Another sold pitch waiting in the wings is called *Beauty School Dropout*, a female version of *Barbershop* with a *Hairspray* twist. A young, white Detroit woman wants to become the best Black hairstylist in the city and enters the mother of all hair shows. Lord, help her. But the next Yearwood pitch-come-feature to go into production will probably be *The Two-Year Mark*, a romantic comedy that has Halle Berry attached. Fox will produce. Yearwood will begin writing the script any day now. Although Berry got on board early, her Academy Award-winning run almost sunk the picture before it got off the ground. Yearwood pitched the movie, which examines love and class issues between an uptown girl and her way, way uptown boyfriend—and I mean Harlem, not the Upper West Side—to Berry last fall.



But the deal stalled when *Monster's Ball* started gaining heat last December. After she was nominated, the project was dead in the water until late this summer. "The thing that excites me about this project is that I know Halle's getting whack shit," Yearwood says. "I know there's not good stuff out there and she really identified with this character and this movie." In fact, Berry was so in sync with her character, Sydney, that she acted out her part during the first meeting. "Now, I have to write it though," Yearwood says, laughing.

I trust that won't be a problem.

Yearwood graduated from Connecticut College, just three hours from her Harlem home, with a degree in Religious Studies ("It was easier than majoring in philosophy ... "). She also spent time at Sarah Lawrence College writing plays as a substitute for academic papers, but never found her groove.

"I was very bitter. I wished it was the '50s and I didn't have to go, because I didn't like school," she says. "It was one of the advantages of being Fonzie. I would work as a mechanic or something." Disillusioned with school but inspired by the movies, she relocated to the Left Coast to attend UCLA's Film School, then transferred to AFI to ride the coattails of her idol, filmmaker Julie Dash.

"The thing that cemented the deal for me was *Daughters of the Dust*," Yearwood remembers. Up to that point, she was pretty sure she'd become a soap opera writer ("How hard could it be? It's all dialogue, all drama."). "I saw it the summer before my senior year in college. Film had never occurred to me as an option. I had never seen people of color in a movie like that. It was like what Steven Spielberg is for a lot of these white guys in film school. I can put images of Black women on film."

Yearwood made her first successful pitch to her mother, who worked as a producer on *The Cosby Show*. Earlier, she came out to her family while attending Sarah Lawrence and experienced little drama. "The environment at that school supported being different," she says. "When you come out to your family, a part of you dies—how they see you and think about you in terms of your future. It has to die because that's not who you are anymore." The Yearwood household supported individuality. Yearwood calls herself the dyke chick; one brother, who could model, runs a Web design company and only wears Armani or Calvin; another brother is a jock now working in finance; her gorgeous sister lives in L.A., as well, and Yearwood calls her a real "around-the-way girl." Her siblings were the characters in a sitcom Yearwood sold her mother, who got

"I was the girl in high school who was obviously gay."

her a meeting with Warner Bros., but she pitched alone and sold it on her first try. "What white people call luck, Black people call being blessed," says Yearwood, with a sigh. "I am very blessed."

continued on page 76

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Pride in NYC

1. [l-r] Tita Gray, Executive Director of Black Pride NYC, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, and NYC Pride Founder James Saunders open the awards ceremony at the Brooklyn Marriot 2. Thelma Houston *feelin' it* on stage at the historic Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street. 3. Calvin Clark smacks some brotha-ly love on the cheek of James Saunders 4. Colonel Abrams turns it out at PrideFest 2002 in the Village 5. The lovely Lydia Lee Love is all smiles with Deepa Soul at PrideFest. Special THANKS to Black Pride NYC producer Lawrence Pickney, [not pictured.] You worked it boy!

Doug Meszler 1-3 Tina Paul 4,5

Mankind is at its best when it is free.

– Dante

photo: greg mcneal

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Hotter Than July Pride in the Motor City

Jason Michael

The Annual Billionaire Boy's Club Brunch during the Hotter Than July Weekend brought together hundreds of pride participants including [l to r] Bryan Philpot-Program Director for National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum [NBLGLF]; Roosevelt Mosby NBLGLF Board of Directors; June Washington Detroit Black Gay Pride Inc [DBGP]. Former Director; and Johnny Jenkins Jr. DBGP Inc., Co-Founder, President-Director.

Pride in Alabama

The Walker County Alabama Committee presented Elizabeth Birch, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign [HRC] with its annual Medgar Evers Civil Rights Award. This is the 4th year of this award. Previous winners have been Alabama State, Senator, Roger Smithersman and the former NAACP Walker CountyPresident, Willie Moore. The award recognizes a person who has made outstanding civil rights contribution in the fields of religion, education or politics. The Rev. David Lewis, r, who presented the award, is no stranger to human rights. He is an openly gay minister in the State of Alabama. He was the first African American to be named Alabama honorary state treasurer in 2001. He has spoken on gay rights issues at University of Alabama, Yale University, Columbia University, Penn State University, and the University of Florida to name a few. He is assistant pastor of the St. Johns Missionary Baptist Church in Dora Alabama. He preaches tolerance and understanding of gays and lesbians.

"I know my HIV status and his, and his, and his..."

www.Prevent-HIV.com

-- Hector, Juan, Marlon, Eric

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Windy City Pride's 1st Prize Poetry Slam winner, T'ai Freedom Ford, c, went back to her native Brooklyn, NY $750 richer after rhyming past the competition last summer. Pride producer Thayer L. Johnson, left, and Slam producer CC Carter, right, presented the check.

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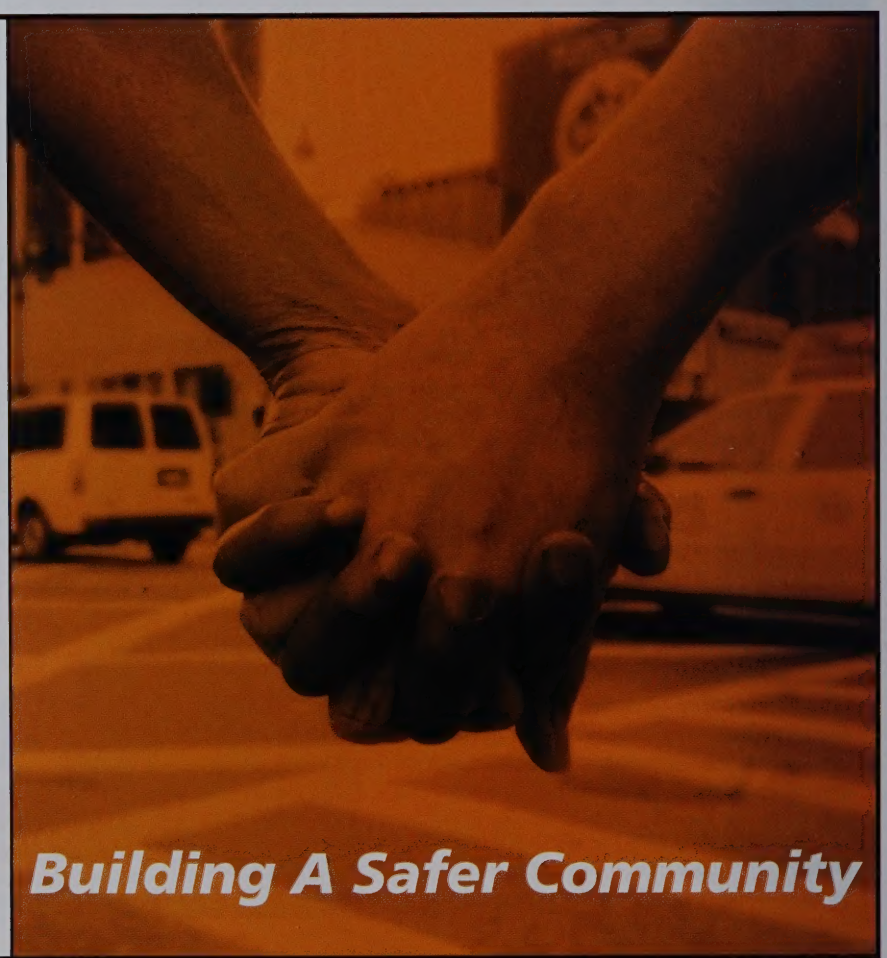

Thanks for making United in Pride in Chicago 2002 a success!

Plan early for 2003:

United in Pride July 2 - 7, 2003

www.windycitypride.org

Some Call Me a Survivor

by Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

Kwabena Rainey Cheeks has been doing battle with HIV for two decades. He's winning.

Some call me a survivor because I am a black 49—year—old gay man that got through the public school system living in Washington, DC. Oh yes, I have survived racism, classism and homophobia, and, on top of all of that, I have been HIV positive since 1984. Some say I have AIDS; that depends on which month you check.

Yes, I AM A SURVIVOR! As the song says,
"Ain't got time to die."

– Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

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   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

2. **The kind or amount of moderate activities you can do, like moving a table, or carrying groceries.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

3. **Walking uphill or climbing a few flights of stairs.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

4. **Eating, dressing, bathing, or cooking a meal.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

5. **Your social activities, like visiting with friends and family.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

If you answered **"YES, LIMITED A LOT"** or **"YES, LIMITED A LITTLE"** to most questions, you may have anemia.

SHOW THIS TEST TO YOUR DOCTOR, AND ASK IF YOU SHOULD HAVE A BLOOD TEST.

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See important safety and product information on the accompanying advertisement.

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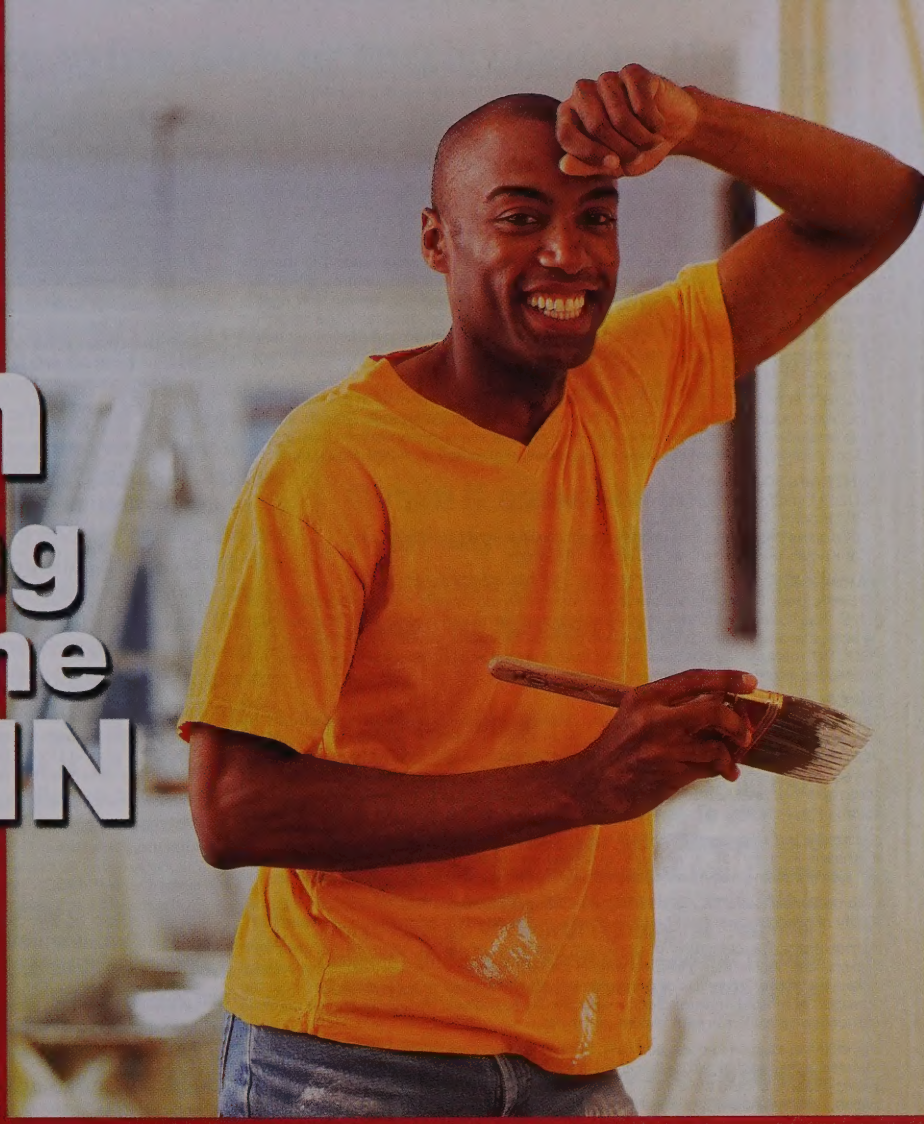

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It's a treatment that's been used for over 10 years and for more than 1 million patients. If you think anemia is stopping you from getting things done, ask your doctor if PROCRIT is right for you.

PROCRIT is an effective treatment for anemia induced by AZT-containing regimens in HIV patients. PROCRIT has a proven safety record. In studies, side effects were similar in PROCRIT- and placebo-treated patients. PROCRIT is available only by prescription and is administered by your healthcare provider as an injection. For complete details, see the Brief Prescribing Information on the following page.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF PRESCRIBING INFORMATION INDICATED FOR THE TREATMENT OF ANEMIA IN ZIDOVUDINE-TREATED HIV-INFECTED PATIENTS

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INDICATIONS AND USAGE

PROCRIT® (Epoetin alfa) is indicated for the treatment of anemia related to therapy with zidovudine in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-infected patients. PROCRIT is indicated to elevate or maintain the red blood cell level [as manifested by the hematocrit (HCT) or hemoglobin determinations] and to decrease the need for transfusions in these patients. PROCRIT is not indicated for the treatment of anemia in HIV-infected patients due to other factors such as iron or folate deficiencies, hemolysis or gastrointestinal bleeding, which should be managed appropriately.

PROCRIT, at a dose of 100 U/kg 3 times per week (TIW), is effective in decreasing the transfusion requirement and increasing the red blood cell level of anemic, HIV-infected patients treated with zidovudine, when the endogenous serum erythropoietin level is ≤500 mU/mL and when patients are receiving a dose of zidovudine ≤4200 mg/week.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

PROCRIT is contraindicated in patients with:

1) Uncontrolled hypertension.
2) Known hypersensitivity to mammalian cell-derived products.
3) Known hypersensitivity to Albumin (Human).

WARNINGS

Pediatric Use: The multidose preserved formulation contains benzyl alcohol. Benzyl alcohol has been reported to be associated with an increased incidence of neurological and other complications in premature infants, which are sometimes fatal. PROCRIT therapy has not been linked to exacerbation of hypertension, seizures, and thrombotic events in HIV-infected patients.

PRECAUTIONS

The parenteral administration of any biologic product should be attended by appropriate precautions in case allergic or other untoward reactions occur (see CONTRAINDICATIONS). In clinical trials, while transient rashes were occasionally observed concurrently with PROCRIT therapy, no serious allergic or anaphylactic reactions were reported. (See ADVERSE REACTIONS for more information regarding allergic reactions.)

The safety and efficacy of PROCRIT therapy have not been established in patients with a known history of a seizure disorder or underlying hematologic disease (eg, sickle cell anemia, myelodysplastic syndromes, or hypercoagulable disorders).

In some female patients, menses have resumed following PROCRIT therapy; the possibility of pregnancy should be discussed and the need for contraception evaluated.

Hematology: Exacerbation of porphyria has been observed rarely in patients with chronic renal failure (CRF) treated with PROCRIT. However, PROCRIT has not caused increased urinary excretion of porphyrin metabolites in normal volunteers, even in the presence of a rapid erythropoietic response. Nevertheless, PROCRIT should be used with caution in patients with known porphyria.

In preclinical studies in dogs and rats, but not in monkeys, PROCRIT therapy was associated with subclinical bone marrow fibrosis. Therefore, zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients should have HCT measured once a week (QW) until HCT has been stabilized, and measured periodically thereafter.

Delayed or Diminished Response: If the patient fails to respond or to maintain a response to doses within the recommended dosing range, the following etiologies should be considered and evaluated: 1) Iron deficiency: Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron therapy (see Iron Evaluation). 2) Underlying infectious, inflammatory, or malignant processes. 3) Occult blood loss. 4) Underlying hematologic diseases (ie, thalassemia, refractory anemia, or other myelodysplastic disorders). 5) Vitamin deficiencies: folic acid or vitamin B12. 6) Hemolysis. 7) Aluminum intoxication. 8) Osteitis fibrosa cystica.

Iron Evaluation: During PROCRIT therapy, absolute or functional iron deficiency may develop. Functional iron deficiency, with normal ferritin levels but low transferrin saturation, is presumably due to the inability to mobilize iron stores rapidly enough to support increased erythropoiesis. Transferrin saturation should be at least 20% and ferritin should be at least 100 ng/mL.

Prior to and during PROCRIT therapy, the patient's iron status, including transferrin saturation (serum iron divided by iron binding capacity) and serum ferritin, should be evaluated. Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron to increase or maintain transferrin saturation to levels which will adequately support erythropoiesis stimulated by PROCRIT.

Drug Interactions: No evidence of interaction of PROCRIT with other drugs was observed in the course of clinical trials.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: Carcinogenic potential of PROCRIT has not been evaluated. PROCRIT does not induce bacterial gene mutation (Ames Test), chromosomal aberrations in mammalian cells, micronuclei in mice, or gene mutation at the HGPRT locus. In female rats treated intravenously (IV) with PROCRIT, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Pregnancy Category C: PROCRIT has been shown to have adverse effects in rats when given in doses 5 times the human dose. There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. PROCRIT should be used during pregnancy only if potential benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus.

In studies in female rats, there were decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, delayed eyelid opening, delayed ossification, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. In female rats treated IV, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Nursing Mothers: Postnatal observations of the live offspring (F1 generation) of female rats treated with PROCRIT during gestation and lactation revealed decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, eyelid opening, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. It is not known whether PROCRIT is excreted in human milk. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be exercised when PROCRIT is administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use: See WARNINGS, Pediatric Use.

Pediatric HIV-Infected Patients: Published literature has reported the use of PROCRIT in 20 zidovudine-treated anemic HIV-infected pediatric patients ages 8 months to 17 years, treated with 50 to 400 U/kg subcutaneously (SC) or IV, 2 to 3 times per week (BIW to TIW). Increases in hemoglobin levels and in reticulocyte counts, and decreases in or elimination of blood transfusions were observed.

Hypertension: Exacerbation of hypertension has not been observed in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients treated with PROCRIT. However, PROCRIT should be withheld in these patients if preexisting hypertension is uncontrolled, and should not be started until blood pressure (BP) is controlled. In double-blind studies, a single seizure has been experienced by a patient treated with PROCRIT.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

Adverse events reported in clinical trials with PROCRIT in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients were consistent with the progression of HIV infection. In double-blind, placebo-controlled studies of 3-months duration involving approximately 300 zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients, adverse events with an incidence of ≥10% in either patients treated with PROCRIT or placebo-treated patients were:

Percent of Patients Reporting Event: Event followed by Patients Treated With PROCRIT (N=144) first, Placebo-Treated Patients (N=153) second:
Pyrexia 38%, 29%; Fatigue 25%, 31%; Headache 19%, 14%; Cough 18%, 14%; Diarrhea 16%, 18%; Rash 16%, 8%; Congestion, Respiratory 15%, 10%; Nausea 15%, 12%; Shortness of Breath 14%, 13%; Asthenia 11%, 14%; Skin Reaction (Administration Site) 10%, 7%; Dizziness 9%, 10%.

There were no statistically significant differences between treatment groups in the incidence of the above events.

In the 297 patients studied, PROCRIT was not associated with significant increases in opportunistic infections or mortality. In 71 patients from this group treated with PROCRIT at 150 U/kg TIW, serum p24 antigen levels did not appear to increase. Preliminary data showed no enhancement of HIV replication in infected cell lines in vitro.

Peripheral white blood cell and platelet counts are unchanged following PROCRIT therapy.

Allergic Reactions: Two zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients had urticarial reactions within 48 hours of their first exposure to study medication. One patient was treated with PROCRIT and one was treated with placebo (PROCRIT vehicle alone). Both patients had positive immediate skin tests against their study medication with a negative saline control. The basis for this apparent preexisting hypersensitivity to components of the PROCRIT formulation is unknown, but may be related to HIV-induced immunosuppression or prior exposure to blood products.

Seizures: In double-blind and open-label trials of PROCRIT in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients, 10 patients have experienced seizures. In general, these seizures appear to be related to underlying pathology such as meningitis or cerebral neoplasms, not PROCRIT therapy.

OVERDOSAGE

The maximum amount of PROCRIT that can be safely administered in single or multiple doses has not been determined. Doses of up to 1500 U/kg TIW for 3 to 4 weeks have been administered to adults without any direct toxic effects of PROCRIT itself. Therapy with PROCRIT can result in polycythemia if the HCT is not carefully monitored and the dose appropriately adjusted. If the suggested target range is exceeded, PROCRIT may be temporarily withheld until the HCT returns to the suggested target range; PROCRIT therapy may then be resumed using a lower dose (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). If polycythemia is of concern, phlebotomy may be indicated to decrease the HCT.

DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

Prior to beginning PROCRIT, it is recommended that the endogenous serum erythropoietin level be determined (prior to transfusion). Available evidence suggests that patients receiving zidovudine with endogenous serum erythropoietin levels >500 mU/mL are unlikely to respond to therapy with PROCRIT.

Starting Dose: For adult patients with serum erythropoietin levels ≤500 mU/mL who are receiving a dose of zidovudine ≤4200 mg/week, the recommended starting dose of PROCRIT is 100 U/kg as an IV or SC injection TIW for 8 weeks. For pediatric patients, see PRECAUTIONS, Pediatric Use.

Increase Dose: During the dose adjustment phase of therapy, the HCT should be monitored weekly. If the response is not satisfactory in terms of reducing transfusion requirements or increasing HCT after 8 weeks of therapy, the dose of PROCRIT can be increased by 50-100 U/kg TIW. Response should be evaluated every 4-8 weeks thereafter and the dose adjusted accordingly by 50-100 U/kg increments TIW. If patients have not responded satisfactorily to a PROCRIT dose of 300 U/kg TIW, it is unlikely that they will respond to higher doses of PROCRIT.

Maintenance Dose: After attainment of the desired response (ie, reduced transfusion requirements or increased HCT), the dose of PROCRIT should be titrated to maintain the response based on factors such as variations in zidovudine dose and the presence of intercurrent infectious or inflammatory episodes. If the HCT exceeds 40%, the dose should be discontinued until the HCT drops to 36%. The dose should be reduced by 25% when treatment is resumed and then titrated to maintain the desired HCT.

STORAGE

Store at 2° to 8°C (36° to 46°F). Do not freeze or shake.

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ORTHO BIOTECH

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When you're living with or threatened by the virus.

Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

I have been in the hospital three times. The first time, in 1990, I was told I would never walk and that I would be dead by Christmas. I asked the doctor who told him this, and he answered, simply, "This is my professional opinion." Everyone has a turning point in his or her life, something that says give up and die or fight back. And at that moment in 1990, I had to make a choice: agree with his professional opinion, lie down, wait for Christmas and die, or, get up and do something that would make things count. If I did die at Christmas, at least I would have made a mark — at least someone would know my name. So I stopped worrying about dying. Death does not scare me. The truth is everyone is going to face it. All that is important is what we do while we are here. I love life, so I make every moment count for something.

I believe adversity comes into our lives just to help us discover what we truly believe. Do you believe more in the problems or your ability to solve them? Do you believe more in your fear or your faith? I personally believe in God, and my God has prepared me for any and every thing. So the choice of what to believe in is mine — and if I don't have the answer, I know how to find it.

To survive in this world, we have to first believe that we are worth being here, that our lives count. We must love ourselves so much that we won't let anyone or anything take us out. When I look back over my life, and think of the things I have overcome this far, how can I give up? When that's not enough, I think about my ancestors and what they had to survive. My mother never had a computer or a 401k plan. She didn't have a car; she could not even drive. But she worked two jobs everyday, volunteered in the public school for over 20 years and raised 6 children and 8 grand children. She was an ordinary black women — a survivor.

When I think about what my mother did with what she had, there is no way I can even think about giving up. Does that mean things are any easier for me? Has racism or classism or homophobia or any of the other "isms" been removed for my world? Not at all, that's not the question or the problem. The question is what am I willing to get up and do about it.

> **"When it comes to your survival, say yes to life! Let go of anyone and anything that does not support you."**

You have a choice. You can be on the sideline or in the game. You can always find a reason not to do something – we all do from time to time. But when it comes to your survival, say yes to life! Let go of anyone and anything that does not support you. I know this is not as easy as it sounds, but if it is worth having, it's worth fighting for. The challenge is finding your passion — what makes you happy, what brings you joy — and going for it.

Too often we think of survivors as people that have climbed some exceptionally great mountain, or have crossed some unimaginable ocean. But we all have mountains to climb and rivers to cross in our lives. Before David fought Goliath, he said, I have fought loins and bears, what is a giant? So the next time your Goliath is ready to fight, remember you have already fought lions and bears. Get up and go do battle! The next time you are looking for the survivor, just go to the mirror and look in your own eyes, you will see the greatest survivor of them all — yourself.

About the Author: Kwabena Rainey Cheeks was a founding member of the Unity Fellowship Church Movement, and has been an HIV/AIDS and LGBT issues activist for more than 20 years. He currently ministers to people living with HIV/AIDS and the African American LGBT community in Washington, D.C.

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Congresswoman Barbara Lee: Heiress to the Black Progressive Throne

words by Kai Wright

BlackAIDS.org U.S. Editor Kai Wright talks with the Bay Area's firebrand representative in the U.S. House.

It's about fighting terrorism, yes. It's also about resources for HIV and AIDS, for housing, for education, for all of those efforts that were challenges before 9/11 and should remain on our agenda subsequent to 9/11. ... That is the challenge for us as progressives, as people of color, as African Americans in the United States Congress. We must make sure that our agenda remains central to the national debate on resources.
— Rep. Lee on the federal budget

When Democrat Barbara Lee stormed into the U.S. House as the representative for California's 9th District in 1998, she had big shoes to fill. The district, centered in Berkley and Oakland, had been represented by progressive icon Ron Dellums since 1970, and its historically radical constituents had come to expect a certain level of national rabblerousing on their behalf. Black America at large had also long counted Dellums among its most trusted national leaders — and as the community's first line of defense on Capitol Hill.

But Lee, who had previously spent more than 10 years as a Dellums advisor, proved more than capable of keeping the Bay Area's political fires burning. After finishing out the retiring Dellums' term, she won re-election with 82 percent of the vote in 1999. In the few short years since then, she's catapulted herself into a national and international leadership role within both African American and progressive communities. And from her seat on the House International Relations Committee, she has stood as one of Congress' most vocal agitators on the topic of U.S. support for international AIDS efforts. In late June, she took a break from the House's debates over prescription drug coverage for seniors and spoke with BlackAIDS.org about the Bush administration's record on AIDS, federal budget priorities, and the growing debate over HIV prevention strategies for young people.

Wright: Let's start with talking about the Bush administration a little bit. We're about a year and a half into the administration. Some folks have been critical of their record on HIV and AIDS. Others have said you know they don' t have the staff they need, we can't be too critical yet. Others have said they're doing a great job. What would you say about where we're at? How would you rate the Bush administration thus far?

Rep. Lee: First, let me say that this is the greatest pandemic of all time. And I believe that the Bush administration has not moved quick enough with their strategy and their initiative. Of course, we're supporting [an appropriation of] one billion dollars with the Global AIDS Fund, which we actually established through legislation that Congressman Leach [R-Iowa] and myself introduced and was signed into law. It is the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act of 2000.

Well, it has taken a while just to gear up the United States participation in that effort. And now we still do not see a major financial commitment on behalf of the United States to this fund. And I believe that we must work very hard with the administration to get them to understand the fact that this Global Fund is a fund that would allow for the leveraging of nine to ten billion dollars a year —which is what [United Nations Secretary General] Kofi Annan has indicated we need to just begin to make a dent in this. So I believe there's a large learning curve that's taking place. And that, while the administration is at least saying that they're committed to addressing the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, that they really do have to put their money where their mouth is. And so far we have not seen that financial commitment.

Wright: What about that same question for your colleagues in Congress? As a body, how do you think you guys have done this session so far on HIV?

Lee: Well, I think that on a bipartisan basis — you know, I've worked with Congressman Hyde [R-Ill.] and Congressman Lantos [D-Calif.], and we actually passed an authorization bill. There was, I believe, $750 million for the Global Fund, and the total I believe was over a billion dollars. So I believe that members of Congress are beginning to see the real emergency nature of this pandemic. But quite frankly the appropriations process has been fairly disappointing, because I believe this year only $200 million was appropriated [Congress first authorizes and then appropriates all federal spending]. And, again, we tried for at least $500 million in appropriations on our side. So it's moving too slowly for me, too slowly for people who are living and dying. And I think that the United States Congress must make this a priority. I see that more members of congress are beginning to discuss HIV and AIDS, to talk about their outrage at what has resulted, and also are beginning to want to work to do something. But I don't see, yet, quite the major push that I think we need.

Wright: What's the problem on the appropriations end? There've been a few efforts, most recently with the emergency supplemental funding bills, to get that Global AIDS Fund money up. Why hasn't it been successful so far? And also, what's the next step in that process?

Lee: Well, you know, the president has indicated that he doesn't want to put too much money until he sees how effective the programs are, where the money's going, that the money is actually being used for what it should be used. But what I say is: How can you be effective and how can we really begin to impact this pandemic unless you put the money out there and allow these initiatives to work? So it's a catch-22. You hear members of Congress saying, 'Oh yes, yes, yes. We want do this. But we want see how these few dollars are going to work first.' And I'm saying come on, that's not very realistic. And I think that's very dangerous, because while we're around measuring results people are dying. This is something that we must invest in at the same time that we're working to measure results and change strategies as we see they need to be changed. Put money

Congresswoman Barbara Lee

where we know it will work. And there are some proven initiatives —look at Uganda. There are countries that have models of success. So we —I believe that we can't wait to see how these few dollars are going to impact the pandemic before we put more money in it. I just think that's a cop out.

Wright: The White House recently announced one initiative that they are taking, this $500 million for focusing on mother to child transmissions in sub-Saharan Africa, and I believe actually globally. You reacted less than enthusiastically to that proposal. Why wasn't that good? What was the problem with that?

Lee: Well, first, yes we want to see more money in mother to child transmission efforts. But number one, this is not new money. Contrary to what they're saying, they're robbing Peter to pay Paul. And that's outrageous given the enormous trillions of dollars in tax cuts that this country has provided for the wealthy. You know, we need new money. Secondly, it's not enough, and it had no impact in terms of resources into the Global Fund. And I just think it's a good message to send. I think the policy direction and the raising of awareness about the desperate need to put resources into to mother to child transmission makes a lot of sense. But clearly this is not a billion dollars, and this is not new money, and this is not a comprehensive perspective on the pandemic. We need prevention, treatment, education, care, vaccine development —we need a multifaceted approach to this pandemic. And so by looking at one strategy and not the entire way to approach this, the interrelatedness of these — the way you approach HIV and AIDS, as I said earlier: prevention, education, treatment, care and vaccine. I think it's just looking at a piece of the problem.

Wright: On the domestic front, we're similarly facing flat funding for a number of programs — ADAP, the Minority AIDS Initiative. Do you know, are there efforts within Congress now to boost those spending bills before they reach [fiscal year 2003]? And how do they fare if so?

Lee: We're working very hard with the Appropriations Committee to try to increase this level of funding, because flat funding certainly is not acceptable given the nature of the pandemic in our communities of color here in America. I mean this is a global pandemic, and we work at this on the Hill in that perspective: it's domestic, it's international, it's global. And we're working very hard with Congresswoman Christian-Christenson [D-Virgin Islands] to try to increase the resources for the domestic minority initiatives also.

Wright: For all of these funding conversations, there is a perspective that says: We're facing a faltering economy, we're facing what's being described as a war on terror, we have this crisis with Medicare, can we really expect —indeed, can we really afford, as a nation —to spend more on these sorts of things at a time like this?

Lee: Well the Bush administration somehow found a way to afford a two trillion dollar tax cut. They found a way to afford a huge increase in the military budget, close to $400 billion. Much of this related to weapons systems to fight a cold war that doesn't exist. So it's about priorities. It's about fighting terrorism, yes. It's also about resources for HIV and AIDS, for housing, for education, for all of those efforts that were challenges before 9/11 and should remain on our agenda subsequent to 9/11. We continue to fight the budget priority fight in Congress, and I think that is the challenge for us as progressives, as people of color, as African Americans in the United States Congress. We must make sure that our agenda remains central to the national debate on resources.

Wright: Finally, you've also been a part of this prevention debate, in terms of abstinence-only versus comprehensive sex education and how we deal with young people and HIV prevention. And you have a bill, that I believe has already been introduced, that's seeking funding for comprehensive sex education. Can you tell me a little bit about what that bill is seeking to accomplish and why we need it?

Lee: Sure. You know in the 1996 pan of welfare reform laws somehow —and I wasn't here

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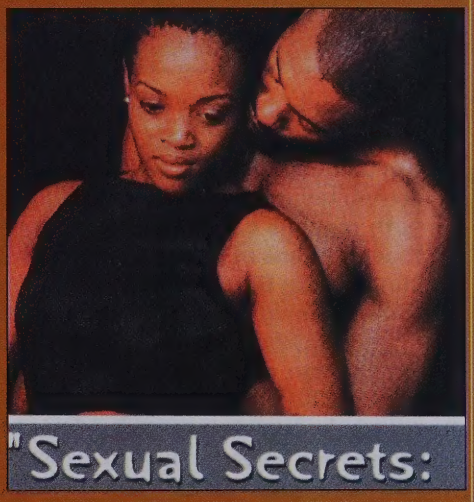
Listen Up Sistahs!

Don't Be in Denial About Your Down Low Man

Calling ALL Sistahs! Yes, even women in the life [because surveys show that many black 'lesbians' are still having sex, every now and then, with a man.]



The Danger of Life on the "Down Low"

by Rennetta Mulkey and Kozetta Jane Harris

Every now and then we may hear whispers about a male friend, family member, church member or co-worker who is "living on the down low". Men "on the down low" are self-identified heterosexuals who enjoy having sex with other men. Men on the down low profess to love women and are often married or in committed relationships with a woman. While women may hold their heart, their sexual desire for men is strong enough to pull them into a dual life, one of secrecy, deception and danger. Not the cloak and dagger danger found in Bond movies, but the danger that comes from exposing themselves and the women in their lives to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV.

One out of every 160 Black women is living with HIV and of those who contract the virus through heterosexual sex, an unknown number were unknowingly at an increased risk because their partners were secretly having unprotected sex with men.

Picture this. Linda and Tyrone are happily married with children. One day their son Tyrone is involved in a car accident while being driven to a pee-wee football game by a family friend. Tyrone senior and Linda rush to the hospital. While their son is being treated in the ER, a nurse suggests that they donate blood. They both readily agree to the minor procedure hoping that their efforts will help save their son or another child. Thankfully, their son is not critically injured. Tyrone and Linda are noticeably relieved by the news but notice that a look of concern remains on the faces of the doctor and nurses treating their son.

After Lil' T is moved to a hospital room for observation, a nurse pulls Tyrone aside to tell him that his blood tested positive for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, HIV. Months pass before Tyrone is able to tell Linda that he is HIV+. Linda listens to the news, not believing what her husband was so reluctantly tells her. She is inconsolable.

Her marriage, she believed, was a good one. Tyrone is an exemplary father, a good provider...a good man. She moves through each day as if in a daze, not understanding how this could have happened to her, to her family.

Tyrone vehemently denies stepping out with another woman. Linda is angry and confused. How else could this have happened? Repeatedly she accuses Tyrone of messing around, of using drugs – the only ways that she knows he can get such a dreaded disease. Finally, Tyrone admits to "kickin it" with several of his "boys" throughout, and before, their marriage. He assures her that he is not gay, that he loves her and does not want to break up their family.

Unfortunately, this scenario isn't as far-fetched as many would like to believe. According to some, living on the down low is far from rare in the Black community. Some suggest that many Black men choose this road because they are afraid to be identified as gay, knowing that homophobia (a hatred for or prejudice against gays) is openly expressed in our community.

Listen Up Sistahs!

Others believe that these men are in denial about their sexuality and refuse to fully embrace it. They use their relationships with women to distract themselves, temporarily, from their desire for men. While both reasons can be true, neither addresses the repercussions of irresponsible sexual behavior; the impact upon Black families, Black children and the overall strength of the Black community.

Ultimately, whether Tyrone had a sexual affair with a man or a woman, is not the issue. While Tyrone's decision to cheat on his wife can cause irreparable damage to his marriage, his decision not to practice safer sex in his liaisons with other men has jeopardized Linda's life, as well as his own.

By now, everyone knows that HIV is not a "gay disease". But what many still do not appreciate is that HIV can be transmitted during unprotected sex with a woman or with a man, in a seemingly committed relationship or in a casual hook-up. The simple fact is that anyone having unprotected sex, whether oral, vaginal or anal, is at risk of getting or passing the virus.

Women need to question their potential partner about his sexual history before the relationship turned sexual. It was suggested that questions should not only center around how many women, or men, their man has slept with, but also if he had multiple partners at one period, if he regularly practiced safer sex, and if he has been faithful in past committed relationships.

If Linda and Tyrone had discussed their past and current sexual behavior, could the tragedy have been avoided? There are no guarantees. People are known to downplay their sexual history, especially when questions are posed by a potential or current mate. Had Linda asked Tyrone about his sexual history and behavior, is it likely that he would have confessed to sexual encounters with men?

In this time of deadly sexually transmitted diseases, every sexually active female must be fully conscious of the risks she may be taking. At the end of the day, very few of us will be able to say that she has lived without ever placing herself at risk. The key, the challenge, is to reduce our risk, to be responsible in our sexual relationships and not to trust others to keep us safe.

The only known way to reduce our risk of contracting HIV through sexual activity is to use latex barriers (condoms, dental dams) each and every time we have sex. Yes, it is possible that your man may be living on the down low, sleeping with other women, or "shooting up" now and then. This, we may not know or even suspect. It isn't fair, and it ain't easy, but it is our reality. As women, we must protect ourselves, there is no other way around it.

NO More Secrets, NO More Lies":

A Video Review by Kinaya Jolomi Ade

I sat astonished as I viewed this powerful 28 minute video tape entitled *No More Secrets, No More Lies: Brothers Living Life on the Down Low*. J. L. King produces the video, and he has decided to openly talk about the double life that he and other "down low" men have led. This life is not one of infidelity where the brother is having an affair with another woman, but one in which the brother is having sexual liaisons with other men (he may even have a special man on the side).

King states that most women are unaware of this secretive life; and after interviewing several sisters, I tend to agree. These down low men are African-American men who don't consider themselves to be gay or even bisexual, but secretly have sex with other men. Many are in serious relationships with women, and many of the down low men are married with children.

According to King, these men do everything that they can, not to expose themselves. They may be among those that gay bash. Many claim to detest homosexuals. There are no stereotypical gay mannerisms to clock, and it appears that they have no gay friends. They are skilled in making sure that there is nothing in their demeanor that suggests that they are anything but completely heterosexual. King further states that love is not involved with their male sexual partners, that is why these down low men can lead double lives. King says that they love the women that they are in relationship with, but they also love "kickin it" with their dude. [I was unable to determine whether or not King still lives life on the down low.]

There were two points in the film that I feel compelled to bring to your attention.

1). King states that not one of the last 5 women that he has had sex with asked him to wear a condom. [He did not state whether or not he did.]

2). He speaks of a married friend who contracted HIV from a down low relationship. This friend is a

father of a newborn baby, and did not know how to tell his wife. King suggested that since this friend had recently returned from Las Vegas, that he tell his wife that he had been with a prostitute, knowing that eventually she, and the African-American community, would forgive him. King warned that if his friend told his wife the truth, he would be ostracized by his wife and his community.

After viewing the video, I felt compelled to immediately educate every sister that I knew. The film was both educational and enlightening. Sisters, ask questions and observe behavior like you've never done before, your life may depend on it.

For More Information Check out:"No More Secrets, NO MORE LIES!" video : J. L. King : King & King Training: www.livingdownlow.com; "Black Men Living on the Down Low": Reprint of Mar 15, 2001 article from USA Today: www.usastuff.20m.com; "The Low Down on Down Low Culture" by Steven G. Fullwood,www.africana.com/column/bl_voices_60.ht; "A Deadly Taboo - Is homophobia in the black community fanning the flames of HIV infection among African-Americans, the hardest-hit population outside sub-Saharan Africa?" by Alicia Montgomery: http://dir.salon.com/news/feature/2001/06/22/aids/index.html These articles are reprinted by permission from the website www.sisterlove.org [Newletter-LoveNotes]

Nationwide Initiative Launched to Fight HIV/AIDS Among African Americans

More than 150 organizations in more than 60 cities across the country will participate in the third annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD) Feb. 7, 2003.

NBHAAD is a nationwide campaign that addresses the HIV/AIDS "State of Emergency" among African-Americans. The objective of NBHAAD is to encourage African-Americans to get educated, get tested and get involved to fight the disease. On Feb. 7, local HIV/AIDS outreach organizations across the country will conduct programs in their communities including free HIV testing, town meetings and youth rallies.

For more information about NBHAAD and to locate local organizations participating in the campaign, log on to www.blackaidsday.org

Congresswoman Barbara Lee

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at the time —somehow they put in a provision that only allowed federal funds [for sex education] to be used by states that would accept abstinence-only programs in terms of sex education for young people. So many states, most states, have taken the money because they agreed to teach abstinence-only. I'm pleased that in California we decided not to accept the money, because we know that abstinence-only is not a strategy that will provide for pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS/STD prevention with young people. So I introduced a bill that would require us to fund programs and to allow states to teach comprehensive sex education programs. Sure abstinence-only is a strategy, but given the dangers of venereal disease and of HIV and AIDS and pregnancy — teenage pregnancy — I believe — and many, many members of Congress believe, and this is on a bipartisan basis — that a comprehensive approach really is the healthy approach and the realistic approach and the way that we really will get to our young people with regard to healthcare and pregnancy prevention. And we're moving forward with our bill. You know, quite frankly, we've got the right wing and the Christian Coalition [against us]. There are those that would not want to see this strategy be part of our [national HIV prevention] strategy. But I think it's just downright outrageous to penalize states, to penalize young people, with the withdrawal of federal funds if in fact they want to learn more about sex education. [There has never been federal funding explicitly earmarked for comprehensive sex education. The 1996 law therefore does not actually withdraw funds from states that teach safer sex, but rather sets aside special funding exclusively for abstinence-only programs.]

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Maisha Yearwood
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Although Yearwood chose to come out to parents formally, her sexuality had never really been a secret. "I was the girl in high school who was obviously gay." She attended the progressive high school at Friends Seminary in the East Village, the alma mater of Live Schrieber, Kyra Sedgewick, and good girlfriend Amanda Peet, star of *The Whole Nine Yards* and *Changing Lanes*.

"She hasn't changed much," Peet told me. "She's one of the most charismatic people that I know. She really lights up a room." Did she and Yearwood dream of the day they'd see their names in lights in Hollywood? Peet laughs at me. "Honestly, we were thinking about the after-school basketball game against Brooklyn Friends. And I want to put it on record that Yearwood couldn't make the girls basketball team. Sh"s a very prissy girl at heart." Although Yearwood pined for many of her fellow classmates, Amanda wasn't one of them. Even if she can play ball. "Amanda wasn't my type, I wasn't even sweatin' her like that."

> "L.A.'s devoid of a lesbian community that I understand, but I manage to find women to date."

Yearwood's an activist, but she's not pushing her gay agenda on Hollywood even as movies get further and further removed from reality. "I don't think anybody's trying to buy anything about a lesbian Black woman or an Iranian woman or a Latino woman. I don't think the studio is trying to hear anything like that," she says. "Hollywood's safe—500 steps behind reality and the way we live our lives." But, she puts a gay character in everything she writes "mostly because we exist. Everyone has a brother or a cousin or a nephew or something. Especially now." Of course, Yearwood changes the dynamics of the game just by walking into the rarified, mostly white, executive suites of studios around town. *The Two-Year Mark* is actually based on her own relationship with a refined girlfriend who had to move with her into her parents' Harlem brownstone. "I guess it's going to start with someone like me, who'll come up with the story," Yearwood says. "Or it's going to be a Halle Berry type who's a lesbian. If I'm not going to do it, who's going to do it?"

After ending a three-year relationship, Yearwood's single now. "Very single," she emphasizes. "Loving singledom, actually. It's very hard to date in L.A. L.A.'s devoid of a lesbian community that I understand, but I manage to find women to date." As if on cue, Yearwood's new friend, a woman she met in Oakland, approaches from a nearby table. This is why Yearwood could barely focus on me. I can feel the love is new. She introduces me then explains her big goals. "I want to be a writer who delivers," she begins. "I want to go to a movie one afternoon and see one of my movies. It's going to be fucking incredible the day I can do that." She smiles broadly. "I'll go every weekend. I'll go to Magic Johnson's theater first. Then, I'll go downtown. Then I'll take my friends. And once that happens," she pauses for a second, glances at her friend, takes a breath. "I'll find other goals."

Maurice Hines
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Choreography and Dancing," Maurice laments, "I was very gracious and thanked them, but without her to share it with it wasn't the same. I just do the work now and hope I can pass it on to the younger generation."

Maurice is currently limiting his performing schedule and is concentrating more on mentoring, choreographing and directing.

"When I'm on tour I teach free jazz and hip-hop classes to the kids. I stopped tapping once my mother passed away because I did that for her.

"I love choreographing and directing. I love being with dancers. I don't have to be in the front anymore. I'm 58 years old, looking fabulous, but I've been doing this since I was 5 years old." And Maurice can still do those 5 o'clock kicks!

Despite his age, there's no chance of Maurice Hines throwing in the towel anytime soon. His busy schedule would challenge artists a third his age, and pity and praise the poor novice lucky enough to fall under the whip of this talented perfectionist. "A lot of the young kids today take one dance class and think they're ready. What are you going to do? Take a hip-hop class and go audition for Alvin Ailey? I don't think so. You must be versatile. Do jazz, tap, ballet, Dunham, Horton. Do all the great techniques so that you have options in life. And learn your theatre. Theatre discipline is top-of-the-line discipline.

"I am so grateful to have a dance background. There were times when I was doing eight shows a week and I didn't feel like coming in for the matinee. But I did

> "What are you going to do? Take a hip-hop class and go audition for Alvin Ailey? I don't think so. You must be versatile. Do jazz, tap, ballet, Dunham, Horton. Do all the great techniques so that you have options in life."

anyway. I remember when I didn't feel like taking class, and I did it anyway, and the teacher said, 'OK, get that leg up to here,' and I did it. Discipline. Dance, theatre disciplines. That's what has kept me young."

So when all is said and done, what does dancer, singer, actor, choreographer, and director Maurice Hines want to be said of him?

"I just want it to be said that I was a good person who did the right thing, especially for my people. There have been opportunities to further my career by doing the wrong thing with regards to my people. But I was never about that.

"I am a Black man in this society. I represent that. I happen to like representing that. People have said to me 'I don't like it when they call you a Black dancer.' And I say, 'It don't bother me because that's what I am.' I bring all the Blackness to it: Cab, Lena, and The Nicholas Brothers. They brought all this to us. So you can call me Black all you want. I love it!"

continued from page 54

Dee Dee has been hailed as the heir apparent to the Jazz vocal legacy by the passing of giants Carmen McCrae, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughan. She saw the tradition dying and decided to take up the mantle. She even toured for several years in For Ella, a show that paid homage to her musical idol, Ella Fitzgerald. After the show's closing, Bridgewater decided that it was time to do something else. She wasn't sure what, just that it was time to be herself for a while. She had done music that was old, some of it borrowed, and much of it blue. (Her debut album is titled *Afro Blue*.) It was time for a foray into her own territory. The result is her latest CD, *This is New*.

The new project is the first album that Bridgewater has recorded that focuses solely on the work of one composer: Kurt Weill. The inspiration for the album was Bridgewater's attendance at a centennial tribute to the composer in Poland. She loved the music but noted that most of the interpretations of it were dark. "I found in his songs an irony and a wry humor, which poked fun at human foibles," Bridgewater said. "I wanted to give that take on the work." She began to listen to everything that Weill had collaborated on—even a work for which Langston Hughes had written the lyrics. The "storyish" character of the songs allow her to imbue the songs with her natural sense of theatre.

This is not an album to listen to if you're in a hurry, or of you need some background music. Bridgewater is a storyteller whose tools are impeccable phrasing and a palette of thousands of colors for words, the envy of instruments made of brass and wood and skin. Perhaps her mature artistic sense is a byproduct of the comfort she feels in her body since turning 50.

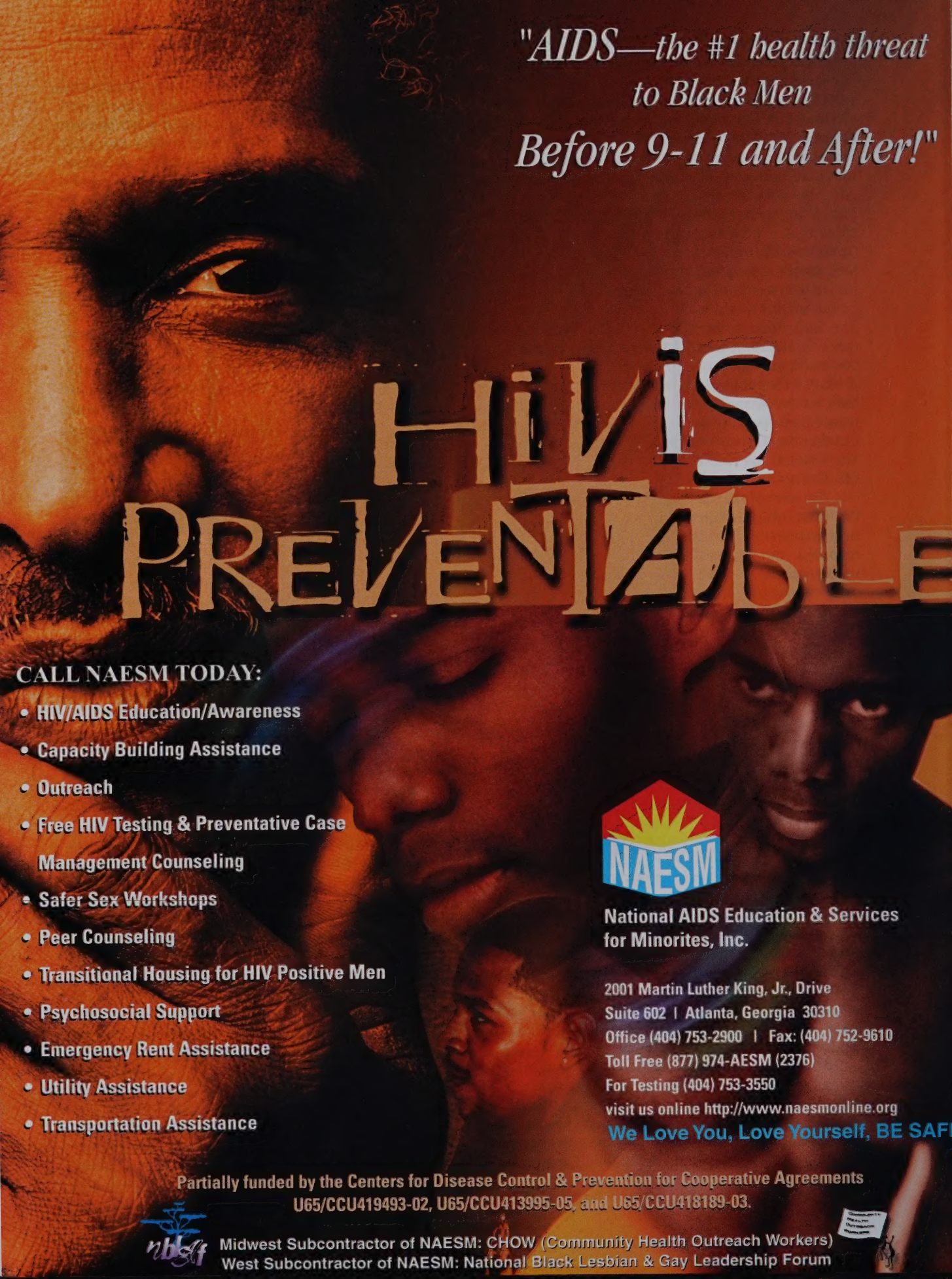
Bridgewater describes a new, heightened sensuality, and says that onstage her personae is more like Millie Jackson than the demure and aloof singer usually associated with jazz. "I don't know what it is, but I am loving it. It's almost raunchy," Bridgewater revealed, "I'm more comfortable in my body than I've ever been. I feel so sensuous ... and I am loving it."

Singing has been called the most intimate art form, one which summons every emotion ever experienced in the artist's life. So, how does Bridgewater handle a lyric? She pauses, distracted by the tinkering of a refrigerator repairman. She pads into the kitchen, and the tinkering stops. She re-enters, smiling, voice gliding across the gleaming hardwood floor. She eases into the architectural comfort of the sofa: "I take the lyric in—in my head first—kind of let it simmer inside, make a thousand decisions at once. What kind of inflection? Should I bend the note? What color? Try something different or sing it straight? But eventually, and on beat, I have to let it go on a musical breath."

The connections with the late Phyllis Hyman are evident. They'd both contributed to the film *The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh*—Bridgewater as an actress, Hyman as a singer on its soundtrack. Bridgewater and Hyman had portrayed the same character in the Broadway smash Sophisticated Ladies. "I loved Phyllis. I miss Phyllis," Bridgewater lamented, "I lost my voice the night of her death. I sang with great difficulty."

After that show, a couple of Hyman's "handlers" came backstage to, Bridgewater thought, lament the loss of a great singer. After exchanging niceties, they expressed interest in working with Bridgewater in a way that fanned a nonchalant hand at the death of Hyman. Bridgewater was outraged: "Get the fuck out of my dressing room!" The incident left her shaken and brought an epiphany: "We really have to look out for one another. In this business it can be dog-eat-dog, and we can get very isolated. We have to check in on one another a little more often."

What's next for Bridgewater? "I don't know," Bridgewater ponders, "Well, I have an idea, but I'm not ready to talk about it just yet." Bridgewater has learned to hold her ideas close until they are in motion. She assures that it will allow her to be all of herself, to combine her love and flair for the theatrical, her voice rich and ripe. Sing, baby. Listen.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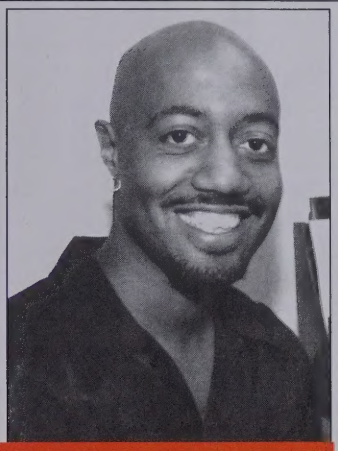
stand up & represent

we're Black, we're out, we're proud!

annual march signals new day for Black gay pride celebrations

words by Craig Washington



"When I saw that other folks were in tears, I knew it was all worth it. I knew why this march needs to continue to happen."

Dig, if you will, the picture. It began one year ago as one proud gay brother's dream. In the birthplace of that most renowned dreamer Martin Luther King Jr., a procession of Black gays and lesbians walked tall and jubilant in the second annual Stand Up and Represent Atlanta Black Gay Pride March on Labor Day. It was a crowning culmination capping a glorious weekend of affirmation, revelation, and reverie.

The event drew 400 people, more than twice as many participants as last year's premiere march. Rev. Antonio Jones of Unity Fellowship Church led the joyous crowd in prayer at the pre-march rally in the West End Mall. From there, they took to the streets drawing occasional applause and puzzled stares from onlookers with such chants as "we're Black, we're out, we're proud" and "who let the gays out." "It was like a pep rally and a celebration of freedom," said assistant march coordinator Nikki Young. Police officers flanked the front and back of this lively contingent to ensure protection. But aside from a lone minister who condemned the marchers, there was no opposition reported.

Political leaders and candidates in attendance included Congressman John Lewis and several Atlanta City Council members including Anne Fauver who is openly gay. Georgia State Senator Vincent Fort joined the post-march rally at West End Park.

"When I kept looking back from the frontline, I saw so many people," beamed march founder Anthony Antoine McWilliams. "When I saw that [assistant march coordinator] Shane Johnson and other folks were in tears, I knew it was all worth it. I knew why this march needs to continue to happen."

For McWilliams, a prominent HIV educator and performance artist, it was once again literally a dream come true. Last year he dreamt of a group of Black gay men marching out in the daylight. "When I woke up, I thought, 'oh, that would be cute,' but I didn't think it could be a reality." When a fellow activist challenged McWilliams to realize his vision, he gathered others including chief coordinator Jimmie Scott to plan the first known Black gay march in less than two months. Despite limited publicity and inclement weather, approximately 200 people marched in the rain from the steps of the State Capitol building to the Martin Luther King Center for Non-Violent Social Change.

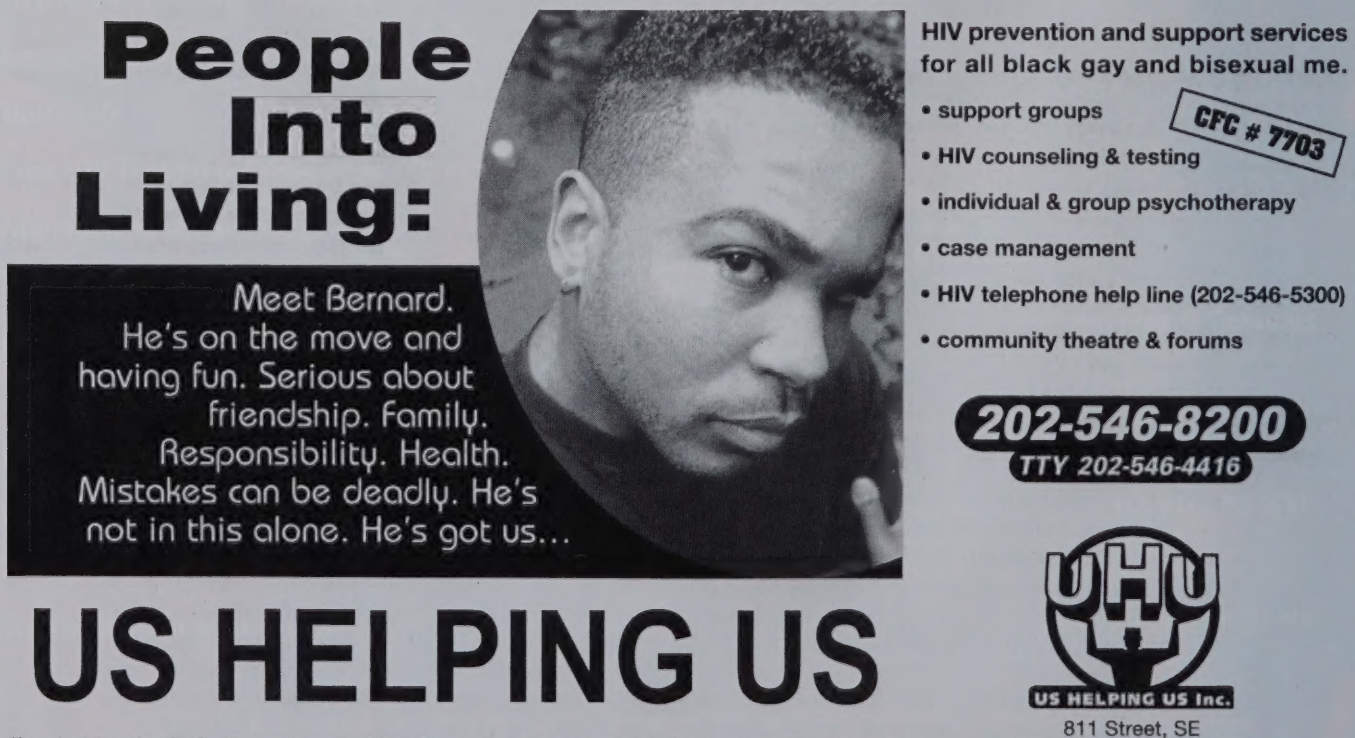
The 2002 march organizers decided to place the march route entirely within a Black neighborhood, the historic West End district. "We wanted to bring it into an historically Black community that was instrumental to the civil rights struggle," said Michael Slaughter, board chair of In The Life Atlanta, the official Atlanta Black Gay Pride organization. "We also needed to build relationships instead of separating [ourselves] from our people." Youth organizer J. Lawrence Warren noted, "It's about time we represent in our own spaces. But it's not about where we do it, as long as we do it."

Warren also emphasized the significance of the march for LGBT youth: "The march gives them something to look up to. When we are part of a community that is proud of itself, it builds confidence." Warren and Young, both 23, called for increased inclusion of youth in future events. Young also noted segregation between men and women throughout the weekend. "I saw small cliques of women among a slew of men. If you look at the overall participation, it's a male-heavy event."

Weeks before the event, the planning committee encountered some local resistance to the post-march rally convening in West End Park. The West End Neighborhood Planning Unit (N.P.U.) initially declined the committee's application. When the decision was challenged by a member, the NPU overturned the vote and approved the rally. Several march organizers speculated that the lukewarm reception may not have been entirely homophobic, since they had not established any prior presence in the West End. "This was a lesson," McWilliams observed. "We can make a difference, and there is acceptance for us in our community."

The march concluded a five-day series of Pride events coordinated by In The Life Atlanta. Most of the activities were held at the Renaissance Waverly, the official host hotel. The weekend commenced with a rousing candlelight vigil led by Pastor YaQar of Alpha and Omega AIDS Foundation. The opening reception featured spoken word and African dance performances. Keynote speaker Mayor Shirley Franklin, Atlanta's first African American female mayor, also became the first Atlanta mayor to address Black Gay Pride. "The progress you have made is wonderful, and I hope we can continue to make progress in the area of gay rights together," she said. The following day included a generous selection of workshops, panel discussions, and a health fair. On the day before the march, 50 attendants flocked to a worship service at the hotel, which was followed by a Pride brunch at the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Center. Slaughter deemed this year's Pride an overall success: "This event allowed African-American LGBT people to come together and celebrate our uniqueness."

At one of the weekend's high points, Congressman Lewis drew a standing ovation for his remarks at a discussion about political involvement. "Things have changed, and its because we got in the way and we agitated. Keep getting in the way and agitating on Black Gay Pride weekend and every day."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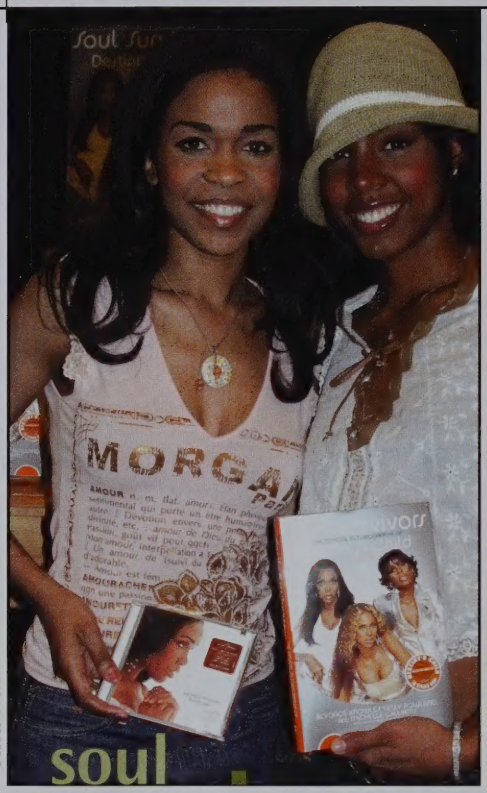


Tina Paul

soul survivor

They have survived the struggles of a budding Texas-bred girl group. They have survived internal strife, the drama, and the media circus of a chart-topping supergroup. Still, Destiny's Child has managed to become one of the best-selling female groups in music history.

Beyoncé Knowles, Kelly Rowland, and Michelle Williams have laid it all on the line in *Soul Survivors: The Official Autobiography of Destiny's Child* (Regan Books). As these bootylicious songbirds spread their wings with solo projects, this book marks the first installment of what will be a long career of soulful music for decades to come.

> "It must be a part of human nature to love drama. We never would have sold as many records—and we never would have been this popular—if our member changes did not happen.
> —Beyoncé Knowles"

literary roundup

reviews by Dr. Alaric Blair

> "The work reads like a conversation with a good friend over cocktails."

Among scholars of literature, there was once a tradition of reviewing books for the purpose of providing some context for their place in the body of scholarship of the Academy (also known as the canon). These days, it appears that people are less concerned about the literariness of books. There is mass appeal for eponymy and fortune. The sad truth is that an infinitesimal percentage of writers (current and dead) have enjoyed fortune and fame—all deserving of their success.

Reviews have become a way of publicizing novels and books of poetry rather than true critique of talent and creativity. No one challenges literature anymore. To do so would appear to undermine the author, especially writers of color. We expect that a critic of color will say that our book is "best-seller" material when it isn't, just because we share an ethnic connection. Personally, I have benefited from constructive criticism as much as I have from the adulations. It was a well-meaning critic's comments that sent me back to my manuscripts and to graduate school in writing.

With more African Americans writing and publishing now than ever, it behooves us (writers, editors, scholars, teachers) to provide some quality control. All books (whether the author tried his/her best or not) shouldn't have been published—not yet. With that, I'd like to begin this journey through our Fall 2002 literary selections.

A bright young writer from Detroit named Brent Dorian Carpenter has written an insightful first novel—

Man of the Cloth (First Books Library). The story begins with a tragic accident that claims the lives of the Catholic church's hierarchy—leaving the church without ordained leadership. The remaining leadership scrambles to keep the church from spinning out of control. The plot thickens when scientists attempt to clone Jesus from DNA taken from the Shroud of Turin. This novel is a true page-turner and will challenge the reader's fundamental beliefs in religious demagoguery and scientific discovery.

Carpenter has penned the most unique story of the summer—one that doesn't necessarily revolve around the vicissitudes of dysfunctional relationships, promiscuous lovers or the lives and times of the Black bourgeoisie—one that this reviewer enjoyed for its sheer "novelty." Get this book to find out if there was a "second resurrection." We've not heard the last of Brent Dorian Carpenter. For, as we sit enjoying his first entry into the literati, his second novel waits in the wings.

Since I'm on the subject of the church, it might be a good idea to discuss another work written by K. Godfrey Easter of Seattle. *Love Lifted Me: In Spite of the Church* (LLM Publishing Group) is an intimate look at one man's struggle to come to terms with his homosexuality and his relationship with the Black church (namely the Church of God in Christ). Though not a new story, it is an important one that Easter brings to bear through his own experiences of isolation from his fellow "Christians." This reviewer can see the cultural and social ramifications of a work such as this being available to those who share in Easter's struggle.

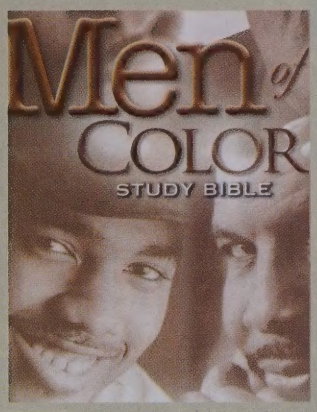
The work (touted as nonfiction) reads like a conversation with a good friend over cocktails at a sparsely peopled club. There's the intrigue of finding new love, controversy in the upper echelons of his church, and the dilemma of raising a son amidst the turmoil of the ever-ending search for his own homosexual identity. Easter tells his story with sincerity and flare; however, the superfluous use of "churchese" is a little unsettling. There are times that his language is fraught with platitudes and is wordy—symptomatic of those loquacious church announcers or of soporific preachers. Many chapter titles are borrowed from hymns of the church so that the reader may find him/herself humming the tunes while reading—an interestingly suggestive device. Whereas the naturalness of speech makes *Love* a realistic read, its clumsiness distracts the reader from fully grasping the genius of this work.

We find, at the conclusion of our conversation with Easter that his life as an openly gay minister of music isn't unlike our own. The fa-

Men of Color Study Bible

review by Jerry Daniels

A small Black-owned business collaborated with 60 African-American religious leaders and scholars, to publish a new Bible interpreted with a Black male perspective.



The Men of Color Study Bible is the product of Nia Publishing Co., an Atlanta-based business founded in October 1998 by Mel Banks II, the company's chief executive officer.

One of the Bible's contributors is nationally known educator and lecturer Jawanza Kunjufu, who wrote a series of books under the title *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys.*

Banks met Kunjufu and some of the contributors of the Men of Color Study Bible while employed at Urban Ministries Inc., another publisher of Bibles based in Chicago and founded by Banks' father, Melvin Banks Sr.

"We tried to get input from folks in all denominations," Banks said.

Interlaced with pages that outline each book of the King James biblical interpretation, *The Men of Color Study Bible* also contains essays that address spirituality and issues specific to the African-American community, but especially those concerning Black men. Some of those issues include the criminal justice system, fathering, marriage, and sexual ethics.

The idea to produce Bibles that address African Americans came while Banks was employed at Urban Ministries Inc. He encountered people doing business with Urban Ministries challenged with the task of getting their children to read the Bible.

"People would ask, 'Is there a Bible my children could relate to?'" he said.

Banks said he approached a number of publishers, including Thomas Nelson Publishing and Zondervan, about putting together a Bible geared toward African Americans.

The response, however, was always: "There was no need for it because Black people already buy the Bible," he said.

GAY REBEL OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE
Selections from the Work of Richard Bruce Nugent
RICHARD BRUCE NUGENT
Edited and with an Introduction by Thomas H. Wirth

literary round up continued

"Nugent is shown in this work to have made more culturally diverse contributions to art and literature than any other gay artist/writer of his time."

miliarity of ostracism, the pain of condemnation, and the obscurity about what the Bible really says about homosexuality make this book an important one in the continuing conversation regarding homosexuality and the Black church.

Not until his transition in 1987 did many people really know and appreciate the tremendous talents of Richard Bruce Nugent—writer, activist, actor, and artist. Incidentally, 1987 saw the transition of another of our brothers in the struggle: James Baldwin.

Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance: Selections from the Works of Richard Bruce Nugent, edited by Thomas H. Warth and published by Duke University Press, is a collection of stories, essays, drawings, and paintings that stand as fitting tribute to the enormity and immense versatility of Nugent's talent.

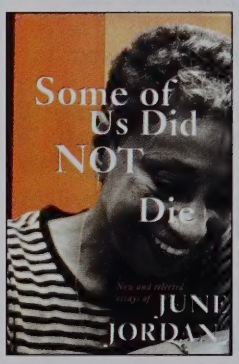
Dubbed a "true Renaissance Man" by E. Lynn Harris, Nugent is shown in this work to have made more culturally diverse contributions to art and literature than any other gay artist/writer of his time. Theories abound with posthumous outings of noted figures in the Harlem Renaissance. It seems that we gain some sense of empowerment when we realize that many writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance loved the way we do during an even more culturally suppressive society than today.

What Warth does in this brilliant testament to Nugent is highlight the artist's works that have the greatest cultural significance to the Black community and chronicle the most important epoch of Black artistic history. The work begins with a foreword by Henry [Skip] Louis Gates, Jr. (who some would say is a foremost authority on Black history) who says that it is "astonishing that so many prominent participants in the Harlem Renaissance were reportedly gay, lesbian, or bisexual." Maybe "astonishing" wasn't the right word. It certainly is "remarkable."

It could not have been an easy task deciding which of Nugent's works to include in this chronicle, but with scholastic aplomb and cultural sensitivity, Warth makes a good show. After a rather long (but incredibly erudite introduction), the reader is presented with one of Nugent's first published pieces, *Sahdje*, which appeared in Alain Locke's seminal anthology *The New Negro* (1925). For those of you who might not know, Locke is considered to have been the "dean" of the Harlem Renaissance—learned, artistic, and intrepid.

No tribute to Nugent would be complete without the inclusion of *Smoke, Lilies and Jade*—Nugent's homoerotic poem that was first published in *Fire!!* November 1926. If *Sahdje* established Nugent as a legitimate writer, *Smoke* (his most important piece) exalted him to the esteemed status of "gay writer of the Harlem Renaissance."

Gay Rebel also includes myriad drawings and artists renderings done by Nugent—often in conjunction with his writings. Now, that's talent—without the benefit of agents, Web designers, or publicists. *Gay Rebel* takes us back to a time when brothers and sisters wrote and produced art because they loved it. Thanks to this work, we get an intimate look into the life and art of our beloved wunderkind, who gives us hope that maybe one day we too may attain artistic beatification.



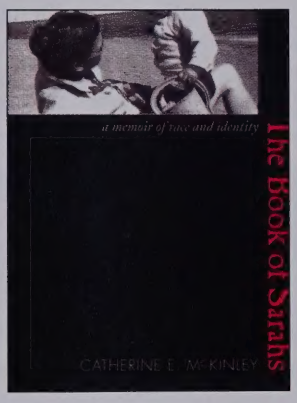
Another blessed spirit that has made its flight to join the ancestors was that of June Jordan who succumbed to breast cancer June 14 of this summer, but her voice still speaks as loudly and proudly as it ever did.

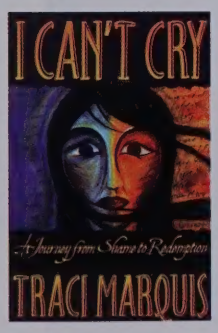
Some of Us Did Not Die: New and Selected Essays of June Jordan (Basic Civitas Books) is a collection of some of Jordan's most popular essays and begins with the Harlem riots in the 1960s and ends with her thoughts on the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It is clear from the topics covered that Professor Jordan was deeply concerned about the fate of African Americans and the society at large. She has been said to have "written her way to the forefront of political analysis, and moral summoning ... " and she wrote until her time on earth expired. I found her essay titled *Problems of Language in a Democratic State* especially pointed in that it confronts the cultural myths of segregation and desegregation

(particularly the latter) as linguistic anomalies that didn't cut through to the heart of incongruence or the accessibility of the alleged American dream.

The profundity of Jordan's works as evidenced by *Some* is only paralleled by her flare for the poetic. Hers was a voice that (like it or not) had to be heard. Although Jordan's body may not be here anymore, [she] "did not die." There can be no better legacy to leave a troubled (but hopeful) society than one that addresses the gravity of social and cultural conditions from a solution-based perspective. June Jordan had the privilege of doing what many have not: leaving her own epitaph as a reminder to celebrate humanness and diversity.

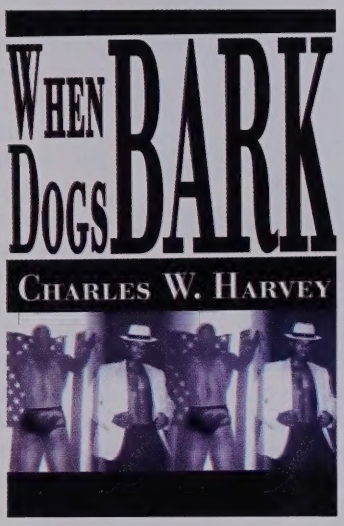
Although Jordan was able to monitor the political and racial pulse across decades of American "evolution," there is another author who tells her own story about the struggle for racial identity. *The Book of Sarahs: A Family in Parts* (Counterpoint) by Catherine McKinley is a memoir of a biracial child adopted by a white family in the 1960s who spends much of her young adult life in search of her birth mother—not exactly a unique story, but the telling of the story with all its intrigue, drama, frustrations, and triumphs is what makes this book worthy of reading. It reads like a "discovery" novel, but it isn't what one would generally read unless there is a genuine interest in the subject. The writing is quite good, but reads like an episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* where adoptees are always trying to find their birth parents. This type of story was quite popular in the late '80s and early '90s—when people from all walks of life set out on journeys to discover themselves. Apparently, this book is the result of a great deal of searching and finding on McKinley's part and identifying (as she puts it) "within someone else's paradigm." The good writing saves this book from being just another "I'm-looking-for-my-real-mother" story.





I Can't Cry: A Journey from Shame to Redemption (Sterling Publishers, LLC), a first novel by attorney-turned-novelist Traci Marquis, doesn't deliver what one might consider a riveting narrative of a personally significant story. The writing is formulaic and trite in some spots, but the book works as a way of delivering an empowering message about an African-American woman who finds redemption in the shame of having been sexually violated—a true survivor's tale.

And it is high time that a story like this was told; however, more attention to thematic structure, details, and the keen eye of a seasoned editor would have made this book a more interesting read. Ironically, the characters are stifled by the overemphasis on wordy descriptions and ungainly dialogue. All in all, *Cry* is an ample first attempt in telling an incredibly sensitive and socially relevant story.



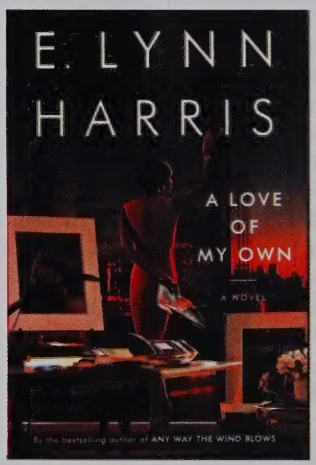
There were two entries of poetry this season. Charles W. Harvey, obviously no stranger to the publishing world, has reissued *When Dogs Bark* (iUniverse)—a book of poetry and short stories. William Wordsworth once defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling ... ." These are the two words I would definitely use to describe Harvey's writing: spontaneous and powerful. His work is spontaneous, because he ambushes his readers; his writing seems to come from nowhere and then—Bam—right between the eyes. The power in his writing has to do with the seemingly unrefined emotions associated with his poetry and prose—emotions not too often dealt with outside of a therapist's office.

I am thinking about a particular story in this collection titled *It All Started with Underwear.* Initially, I assumed the story would be a benign, quasi-erotic story about a gay man's affinity for men's underwear. Well, it turns out that the story is indeed about a man with a fetish for other men's underwear, but the results are (let's just say) "criminal." I liked this story a great deal because it challenged my ivied literary conventions and it was well written.

Not for the faint at heart or the hypersensitive, Harvey's writing may well be a response to the "angry-black-gay-poets" movement that has been gaining momentum lately. Harvey tells a "bad" story "good" and uses his poetry as a way of delivering unrelenting blows against social institutions. Although a few of the poems are structurally flawed and "whiny," I enjoyed reading them for their merit as thought-provoking expres-

sions of spontaneous and powerful feelings. If Harvey's voice is akin to barking, his is one of the deepest and most ferocious I've heard in a long while.

Tales of a Woojiehead (Blackgurl Press), by Chicago native Gaylon B. Roberson, is the authors first published book of poetry. We applaud her efforts to pen the whisperings of her poetic muse. I was especially struck by the calypso-like rhythm of verses and Roberson's careful construction of poetic symmetry. Included in this amalgam of poetry are short (very short) stories that are to the point and well written. Roberson's turn of phrase is both unique and refreshing and has a performance appeal. Augmenting the appeal of the books poetic merits are Roberson's use of various type fonts to convey mood and meaning. Ordinarily, this would be a publisher's no-no, but given the tenor of her poems and short stories, the device works wonderfully well and gives her work the type of uniqueness and variety very much missing from similar works already in print.



At last, we come to the book that has everyone talking: the eighth (count 'em 8th) installment in the E. Lynn Harris collection. A Love of My Own (Doubleday) continues with the saga of Raymond and his loves (or lack there of), a few new male and female characters and more fantastic escapades of Harris's larger-than-life characters. One in particular, Zola Denise Norwood, the editor of Bling Bling magazine appears to play opposite Raymond Tyler (a Harris perennial).

Not much (new) can be said for this novel other than the fact that Harris has decided to use more current events in his writing. Apparently, he was able to salvage the manuscript from the committee's pen in order to include the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

As usual, Harris's characters spin out of a grand imagination as he weaves more intrigue and secrecy into the sexuality and private lives of his characters. I found them even more contrived than usual and lacking in universal relatedness. Scene descriptions were linguistically unessential and verbose. But this is what sells novels, they tell me.

"As usual, Harris's characters spin out of a grand imagination as he weaves more intrigue and secrecy into their sexuality and private lives."

Whereas this "escapist" literature may be hugely entertaining and profitable, it is substantively deficient—the stuff soap operas are made of. Reading these types of books, as literature, is tantamount to reading the nutrition information on sugary snack packages for the recommended daily allowance of vitamins and minerals; you won't find any.

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continued from page 79

In fact, Barna Research Online, a marketing research company based in Ventura, Calif., reported that a 2001 study showed that African Americans were more likely to read from the Bible than whites.

These statistics do not surprise Banks. He notes, on the other hand, that a great number of Blacks, especially Black men, are attracted to other religions, such as Islam. Demonstrating the African presence in the Bible, he said, would help Blacks feel a greater connection to Christianity.

"Christianity has been considered [by most Blacks] a white religion," said Banks, noting that earlier Bibles contained pictures depicting biblical characters, including Jesus Christ, as white. "That's why we're trying to draw out the Black presence [in the Bible]."

Charles Britt, a deacon at Carolina Missionary Baptist Church in Suitland, Md., was unaware that Black characters existed in the Bible until his pastor mentioned it during a Sunday morning church service. Britt now owns a copy of the *Original African Heritage Study Bible.*

James C. Winston Publishing Co. published the Original *African Heritage Study Bible*, which depicts biblical characters as black, in 1993.

Pictorial depictions of Black biblical characters also exist in the *Holy Bible for Children of Color*, a product Banks says he and one employee self-published in his home under the name Children of Color Publishing.

"It was actually for children [and] adults," Banks said. The Children of Color Storybook Bible followed. Thomas Nelson Publishers and World Publishers lent support to Children of Color Publishing.

Because of an interest to produce Bibles addressing Blacks in general, Banks changed the name of his company to Nia Publishing Co. in October 1998. The company also grew in the number of people employed by Banks. On staff today are four telemarketers, who contact bookstores and help independent distributors, an administrative person, a business consultant, and an editorial director.

Released in 2000, the *Women of Color Study Bible* was the first book introduced under the new name. It received excellent reviews from customers who bought the book through Amazon.com and then wrote reviews published on the site.

"We as African Americans haven't been taught about our place in biblical history," the reader said. "But because of the extensive research by [Nia], we now know." "When the *Women of Color Study Bible* came out people would say, 'you got the women's, now where's the men's'," Banks recalled.

Nia Publishing released *The Men of Color Study Bible* last February. While it does not contain images of Black biblical characters, in each of its study sections it does mention a Black presence. The Hammites, introduced in Genesis, are an example.

This fall, Nia publishing company will release five new books. T*he Wisdom and Grace Bible*, produced for young women of color, is one of these books.

To learn more about the products Nia Publishing Co. offers, readers can visit its Web site, www.niapublishing.com. Readers can place book orders there or by also contacting the company by phone at 770/969-8103.

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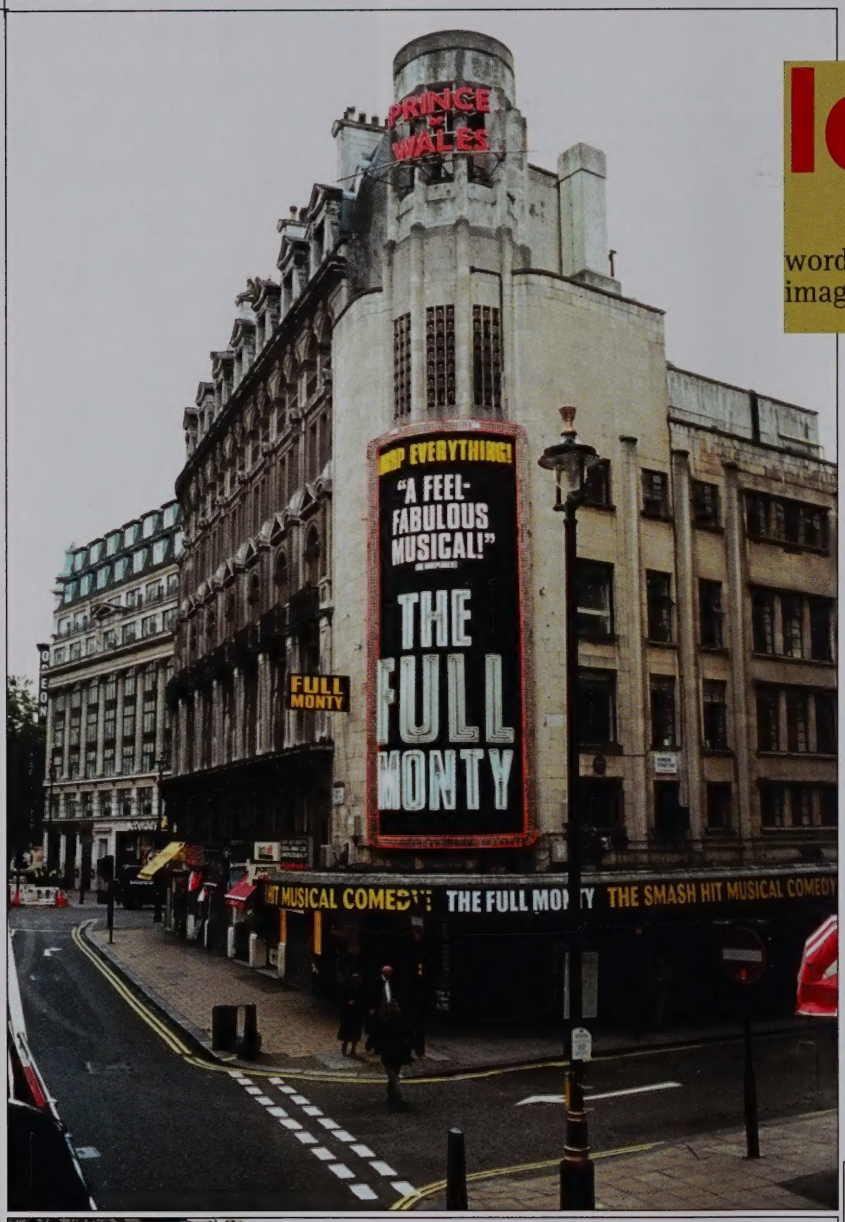
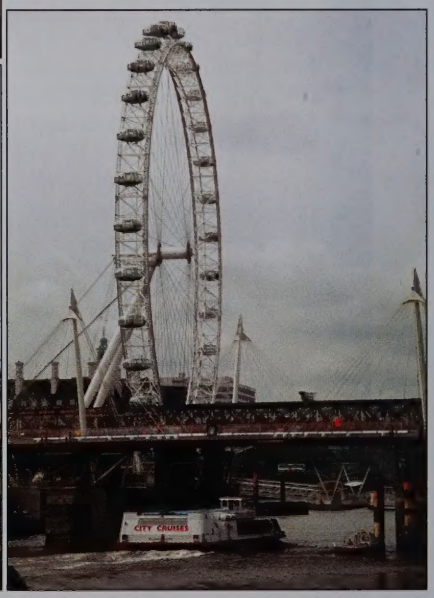
london
in a flash

words by Michael Andrea Adams
images by Darryl L. Matthew

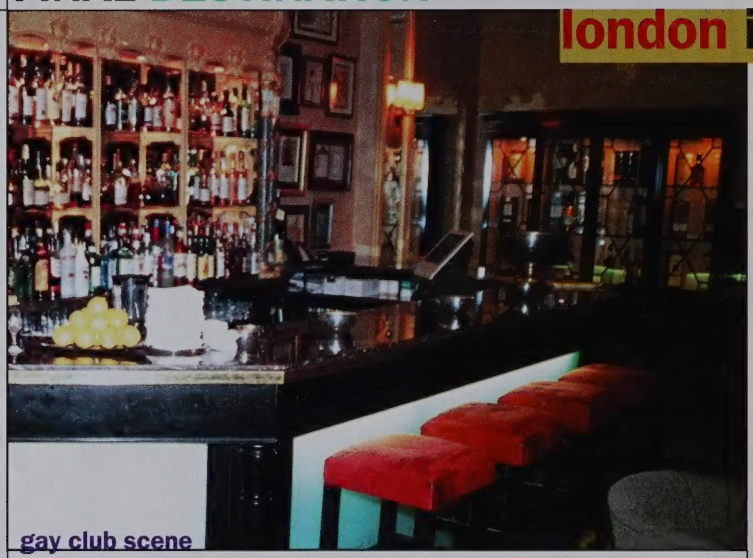
The recent launch of Brilliance of the Seas, the newest vessel in the Royal Caribbean fleet, brought forth a fury of travel industry professionals to the city of London for a two-day stint.

Home to more than 7 million, London, mother England's capitol, is enormous in size. After an 11-hour flight from Los Angeles, I was not up for sightseeing on the first day. And since a city this big can in no way be covered in a day, here it is just for you with the quickness.





london in a flash

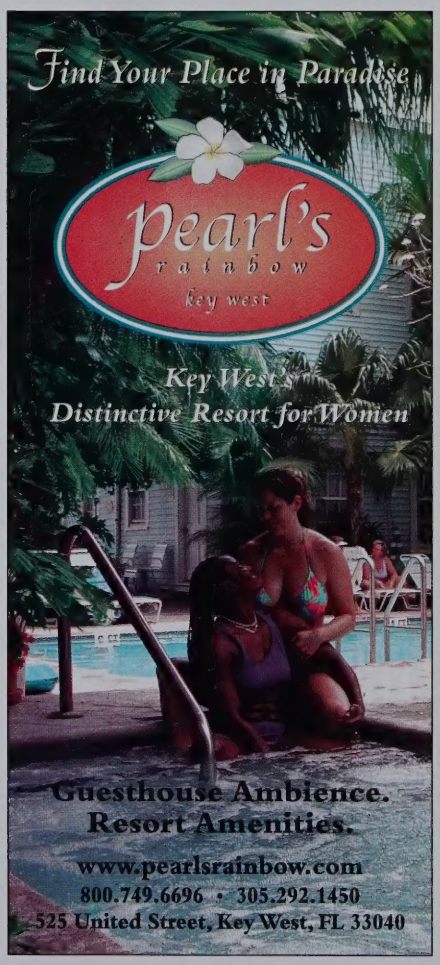


gay club scene

Heaven-*adjacent to Trafalgar Square in the heart of London's West End. www.heaven-london.com. In Brixton,* **The Fridge**-*the place to be on Friday or Saturday for "Love Muscle."* **Earl's Court**, *near Kensington Palace-considered to be an upscale gay area.* **Old Compton Street**-*a trendy community in Soho full of gay pubs and bars.*

lodging & entertainment

Hotels run the gamut from no-frills to the lap of phat luxury. It all depends on your budget.
For the most of London, deals and all, log onto www.visitbritain.com or call the British Tourism Authority in New York at 888/899-8391.



The Big Picture

The city is divided into five sections: West, East, North, South, and Central. Each region is made up of a multitude of communities with something for everyone. Travel on the legendary River Thames is considered as a voyage through the city's history. British Airways' state-of-the-art London Eye offers sweeping views of the entire city and beyond. Afterward, put on some comfortable shoes and get to steppin' for an up close and personal experience.

West London

The west side is home to such landmarks as Kensington Palace, the former home of Queen Victoria. England's largest castle, Windsor, is also situated in West London, as are The Royal Botanical Gardens and The Natural History Museum. To experience the abridged version of London's attractions, climb aboard one of the many "hop on/hop off" tour buses. For a flat and reasonable fee, you will get a view of not just West London, but nearly the entire city. Do not, however, pass go or leave West London without a visit to Chelsea and Knightsbridge, home of the world-renowned department store Harrods, whose Latin motto "Omnia, omnibus, ubique" (everything, for everyone, everywhere) perfectly defines the clientele on any given day.

A few blocks down from Harrods is where you'll find the more hip Harvey Nicks (Harvey Nichols if you're into formality), another high-end department store where an array of items reminiscent of traveling abroad can be yours. And while the British pound,

london in a flash

"British Airways' state-of-the- art London Eye offers sweeping views of the entire city and beyond. Afterward, put on some comfortable shoes and get to steppin' for an up close and personal experience."

getting there

British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, United, American and Air New Zealand offer nonstop flights from gateway cities to London's Heathrow Airport (LHR).

From LHR into the city: The cheapest way into London from the airport (a 40-60 minute journey) is the Tube's Picadilly line @ approximately $5.60 in U.S. Trains leave every 10 minutes. Or try the Airbus leaving every 30 minutes and stopping throughout London (www.gobycoach @ approx. $12.50 US one way.

symbolized by what looks like a small "f" trying to be a capital "L" written in cursive, is worth almost double the value of the U.S. dollar, many items are comparatively more reasonable there. Play it safe by following the rule of thumb when traveling abroad, which suggests that if you purchase what you can't get at home, you will in no way feel cheated.

Central London

Central London is home to the twins: splendor and grandeur. It is also the seat of England's government where you'll find Buckingham Palace, The Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, England's most important church and national shrine. The tranquil Hyde Park, where the royal guards pass in between the change in shifts, is also in the vicinity as is Trafalgar Square and the Nation's Galleries.

Probably the best known location in all of London is Piccadilly Circus, an intriguing mix of gentleman's clubs, touristy shops, and giant neon signs somewhat reminiscent of New York's Times Square.

Soho was once a community for British subjects to experience sex clubs and sleaze. Convent Garden was the rundown haunt of vegetable and flower traders. Pretty SoHo Square is now a bustling community where the employees of the film, advertising, and design companies of nearby Dean and Wardour Streets come for a sandwich during lunch. The bosses, however, can most likely be found in the restaurants of Greek Street, just south of the square. Old Compton Street is another haven for Epicureans alike. And for the freshest fruits and vegetables, head for the Berwick Street market. Soho is also home to the multilevel jazz club Ronnie Scott's, a must-do for American tourists.

Visit Convent Garden's covered mall and the abundance of very chic and unique boutiques and outdoor cafes. The Royal Opera House is also in the neighborhood. And since you're so close, be sure and stop by Chinatown for Chinese food in London. Marked by beautiful and ornate gates on the street and ducks in the windows of almost every restaurant, you wont miss it. There are a ton of places open 'til the wee hours of the morning in this part of town. Just be careful because it's fast!

Last of all, you must do tea. Afternoon tea, that is. Because you're a tourist, hell, do it in style at The Savoy Hotel. You'll experience near royalty and above arriving in their Rolls Royce as the piano man plays while you indulge in a tower of finger sandwiches, scones, and a side of tea with milk, or cream if you prefer. Enjoy!

royal treatment

The launch of **Brilliance of the Seas**, *the newest vessel in the Royal Caribbean fleet, brought a fury of travel industry professionals to the city of London for a two-day stint. Our travel editor, Michael A. Adams, was one of them.*

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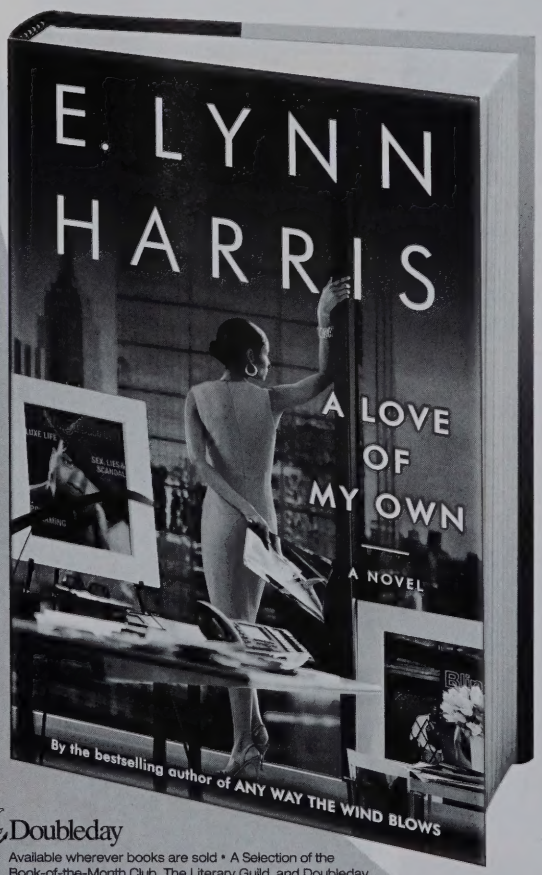

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PIECE OF MIND

Struck Again

words by Donna Payne

I am writing in response to the "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" article by Dorinda Henry. The Human Rights Campaign has struck again. They have struck a cord in the African-American community with Atlanta Gospel & Soul because the work needs to be done. Currently, we have African-American clergy in Miami, joining the Religious Right to fight against us. A flyer with Dr. King's picture on it, telling African Americans that Dr. King would be outraged if he knew homosexuals wanted "special rights." This was passed out to 300 Black churches. In the state of Washington, we have African-American clergy also teaming up with the Religious Right to keep us from having relationship and family protections. Around the country, a lot of African-American clergy are not willing to discuss sexuality, let alone sexual orientation. At which point will you choose to enter and begin the work that needs to be done?

HRC has already started the work by having Gospel & Soul. Connections in the local Atlanta community were made a year in advance. Churches were asked to attend by members that either came out of the closet by asking their choir and pastor to participate in the event *or* they were already out and felt their church should participate. One church was asked to participate by a straight ally that wanted to help. The process, calling, meeting, and writing letters to churches takes five months of local organizing work.

It is always easy to look at HRC's Gospel & Soul event from the outside with highly critical glasses. Atlanta Gospel and Soul was very successful with 450 people attending. That speaks for itself. Instead of using energy to attack HRC, I would suggest you change your "critical glasses" and put on some "work glasses." We need every same-gender-loving person writing letters to their pastors in their home state to let them know we are present, we are loved by God, and we deserve equal rights. Fight for your God given rights, don't fight us!

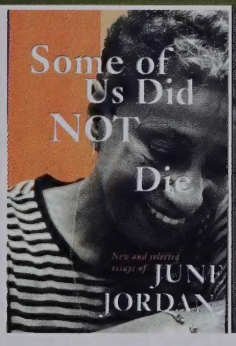
Donna Payne is Constituent Field Organizer for the Human Rights Campaign. She resides in Washington, D.C.

Remembering june jordan

words by Shirlette Ammons

1936 - 2002

"Any abridgement of anybody's right to exist places in jeopardy each one of us, regardless of race, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, or gender."



The Life of A Politically Incorrect Poet

June Jordan, prolific essayist, novelist, journalist, educator, and "Universal Poet," died on June 14, 2002, after a valiant bout with cancer. Twenty-six books and publications in countless anthologies, literary journals, and magazines honor her career as the most published African-American writer in history. Recognizing her work is a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Conference of Black Writers, a Rockefeller Foundation Grant, the Prix de Rome in Environmental Design, accolades from the United Nations and Library of Congress, readings sponsored by the Academy of Poets, and teaching posts at City College of New York and Sarah Lawerence College. Since her first book, *Who Look at Me*, a poem dedicated to African-Americans published in 1969, Jordan has endlessly loved and fought on our behalf.

Born in Harlem, raised in the Bed-Stuy section of Brooklyn, Jordan's conversations with "Minister Malcolm" at his Temple No. 7 Headquarters in Harlem molded the platform for radical change in the struggle for Black liberation during the Black Power/Black Arts Movements. Her participation in the Feminism and the Black Writer seminar at the National Black Writer's Conference in 1978 insurrected the taboo between Black women, lesbianism, feminism, and what (if anything) a woman's sexual orientation has to do with her literary merit. Always one accurate step ahead of the changing times, Jordan's work began on the frontlines of the Black struggle and ended powerfully on the page, each breath confronted and confronting. She spent the final leg of her career as Professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley.

Author Shirlette Ammons recalls her interactions with the Poet/Warrior, June Jordan

When I sat down with Jordan in her UC Berkeley office in fall 2000, I asked her straight up, "Why ain't you crazy?" Her immediate, logical reply, "I don't have time to be."

On the train, like where I'm from, nothing is more than a blur. Modesco, Wasco, Merced, trivial black dots on the California map, whiz by so absolutely. I think about my aunts back in Mount Olive, N.C., and the contrived cold that marks their daily routine. I recall them adorning layers of cotton, fleece, and flannel to weather the refrigeration department at Carolina Turkeys. This nostalgic trip jabs my senses as I journey home in my thoughts on an early morning Amtrak that is at least 3,000 miles from my aunts and the turkey plant's frigid stench.

Poets commit the burden and beauty of each memory to their senses. This is why it matters to take a five-hour train ride from Bakersfield to Berkeley, Calif. to touch June Jordan's prolific right hand, the hand that penned jazz poetry so shrill it sings like a trumpet resounding from some higher place. Her delicate voice articulates poetry and political activism as if they are water from the same overflowing river. Jordan is, as she has been called, the "universal poet." Her writings take the scenic route home so that we can absorb everything she has already seen. Why does this poet/woman work so diligently to conjure a more sensible memory? When did she notice the air changing like the fraudulent winter behind the turkey plant's stony doors?

I am waiting for Jordan in her sixth floor office on UC Berkeley's campus. A picture of an Asian-American woman, tank-topped, buzz-cut, occupies the wall in front of me. Where are you? Torso precise at the corner of the wall. Eye casting me into a mystery. Hand of the hungry (from Jordan's *Living Room: New Poems* by June Jordan). She, holding a pro-action sign powerfully high, sends a rush of energy through my body. I wonder if poets realize they are holding up a sign. Is that enough? To write a poem about change and let it sit on a page hoping someone eventually reads it, "gets it" then purges forth with elevated voice and signs and fists? As Jordan raps up a conversation with a young man who stopped by, I realize I am here, recalling passages from Jordan's *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood*: Ace! Look me in my eye! So I lifted my head to look him in the eye. What are you afraid of? And I answered him, Nothing, Sir. ... And at that moment I felt like I was making myself a promise: A big one, reciting lines from *Manifesto of the Rubber Glove*: I am wearing brand new loud blue rubber gloves because I don't wanna die from mainstream contamination/ mainstream poison water poisonous like ... and living the quote: A woman's body is the universal shelter (from *Living Room*). I am wondering about her fiery spirit, comprehending how strikingly massive word power really is. June Jordan's language pierces me to the bone and I shiver at the load her soul carries. Any abridgement of anybody's right to exist places in jeopardy each one of us, regardless of race, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, proportional size (from Jordan's, *Affirmative Acts: Political Essays*). We are up at the world's sleeping hour because we don't want to bare this stinking weight alone.

Liberation theology. How race is lived in America. Can you catch up?

Sitting outside room 2032 in the Valley Life Science Building on UC Berkeley's campus won't make me a poet anymore than swallowin' a frog will teach me to holler for rain. But I am small and hungry, excited to see her approaching.

Shufflin feet that sound like sandpaper music. Cropped hair, the color of watered-down black cherry Kool-Aid. An alternatively business-type manner, like catch up with me cause I'm on the move. Voice runnin like liquid lava toward one of those indigenous places in her poems, molten and lyrical, destroying the contaminated village, daring it to build again.

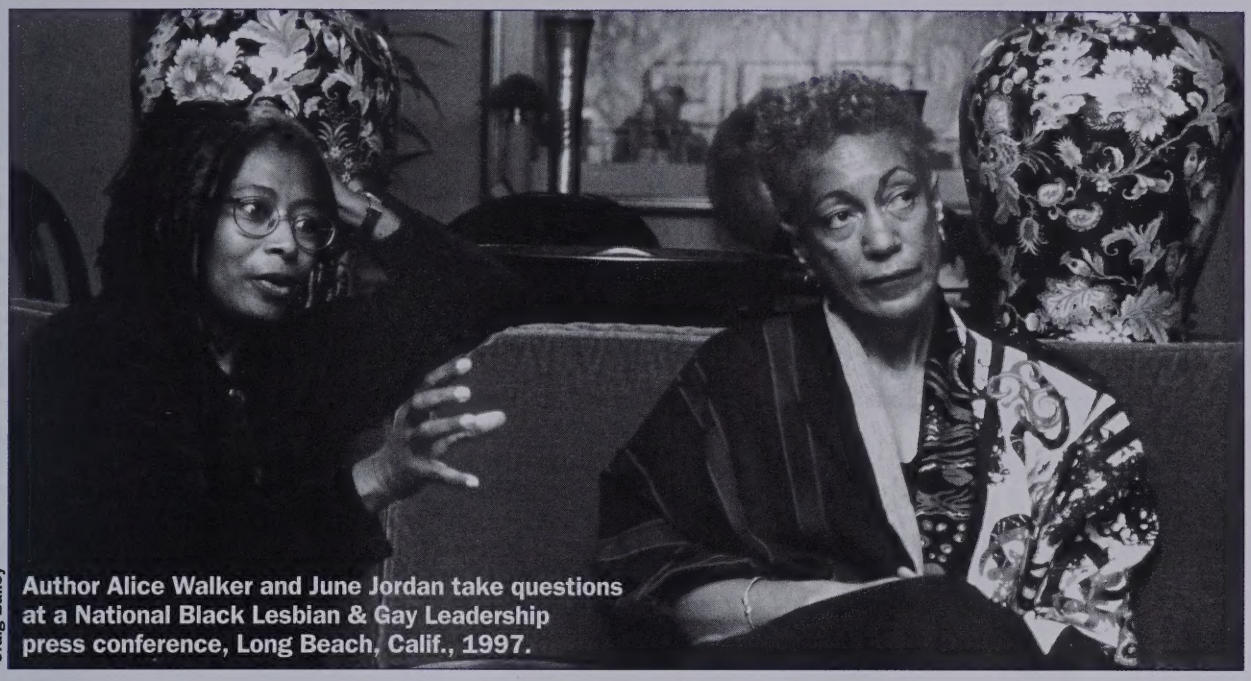
Before I am welcomed into the class, Jordan asks her students if they would mind me sitting in on their discussion. She treats the learning environment as a community of equal voices deciding democratically to welcome visitors. And I trust what I can see and what I can hear and what I can do on my block, and around the corner, and on the campus where I teach (from Affirmative Acts). I wait some more before a round woman with a vibrant smile cracks the door and motions me in.

Jordan's 12 o'clock poetry class is reading persona poems. They are relinquishing their own identities to write the poem of someone they will never be beyond the life that emerges from these lines. At some point you just have to trust/somebody else the soldier/wearing a white shirt the poet/wearing glasses the woman/wearing red shoes/into combat (from Living Room).

The class consists of about 20 students who personify the globe's diversity. One olive-toned young lady talks about Hinduism and her grandfather's singing of the Gita, which she recalls in recitation. Jordan becomes a student, listening, asking an occasional question, yielding the floor to this poet/teacher sharing her ancestry.

Hinduism. Service and sacrifice. Like a tortoise withdraws his limbs, so does the God-realized withdraw his senses. Stratified society. Chocolate cotton. Guatemala. Chocolate persona poem. Homeless man, the world's recyclist You bring out the sista in me. No adverbs. Poetry as an understanding of the world. Poems on dharma and karma due Tuesday. Comments and constructive criticism. Pass the poem back to its original owner.

By the end of class, I am understanding cultural pluralism, a term I came across in *Affirmative Acts*, a collection of political essays by Jordan. A democratic philosophy of cultural pluralism is what I just witnessed in her poetry class: A society in which numerous distinct ethnic and racial and religious groups rightfully and



Craig Bailey

Author Alice Walker and June Jordan take questions at a National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership press conference, Long Beach, Calif., 1997.

equally *co*-exist within one nation. The belief that no simple explanatory system or view of reality can account for all the phenomena of life (from *Affirmative Acts*).

She takes a seat an arm's length away from my nervous heartbeat. She asks me, "So, what do you want to know?" just like that. After thanking her for the work she does, I say, "I just want to know about your process, your theory of teaching and writing poetry, and how it all comes together."

The passion of her plight is as obvious as the light in her eyes. She describes the Poetry for the People program as a village of what I call Truth Poets, those folks who make sure change keeps changing—for the better. I was looking at the students: Asian- and African- and Hispanic- and Native American ... As I listened to their modest demands for safety and representation, I felt almost calm: They were working it out. They had to (from *Affirmative Acts*). I interpreted the objective of the class to introduce, cultivate, and nurture a creative resistance to an indelible capitalist machine. Poetry is the propelling avenue.

The class views itself and the world as a collective. As with their persona poems, they step into a situation before they consider changing it. They will ultimately take their knowledge of writing and applying poetry into the Berkeley Public School System, accepting responsibility for the co-existence of justice and creative expression within academic walls. Because she is teaching us to write while standing, the history of our now will read like a poem in which each word, each member, is significant.

It is no longer that white America asks what is to be done "to integrate" Black people into "mainstream" society but that white America has expanded its racist perspectives to discredit or preclude all non-European immigration, all social programs indispensable to anybody not born middle-class, and all non-European languages, histories, literatures (from *Affirmative Acts*).
Change is not absolute. Poetry for the People. Too many young people don't know their history. CHANGE IS NOT ABSOLUTE. Grabs my hand. Wish you the best. Always.

There is always a child "born with a veil over her face," my grandma would say. She grows up thinking too much, wanting more than a somehow-someway gospel hymn that never found its way out of the sanctuary of a disquieting solitude. Someone will recognize her as strange. Someone else knows she will do great things.

One day she will ask a question no one can answer, The Nazis? Does snow make feet bleed, Momma (from *Soldier*)? She will be talkin' crazy. She will easily learn the language of the white folks. She will add her own thang. She will watch the world carefully and wish to stir it up with her words.

She will learn that poverty and oppression are putrid smells. She will realize that poor folks get used to the stench. They start to believe the whole world smells sour. They become complacent with pollution. They welcome it like a visitor who ain't goin' nowhere.

And then she will emerge from this stinking place, educated and grown, her memory full of that foul smell. She will go home and around the globe and realize that she has never been alone. Her lungs will become full of rank truths. She will be politically incorrect because her voice will rumble incensed poems. Standing in the middle of everywhere reeking of home, she will knowingly proclaim:

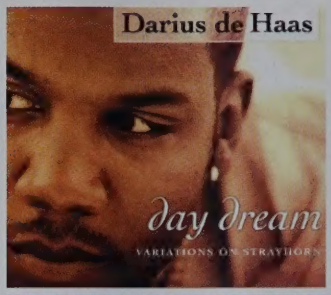
I want to be a poet. Or at least love like one. I want to join the universal struggle and make my wordteeth strong. I want to process the world and change it slowly. I want to kill this smell. I am going to kill this smell.

Rest easy, Warrior Woman.
You have earned your restin' place.

billy strayhorn

1915 - 1967

words by Michael K. Watts



"He was an unsung hero, a great figure in history who created a great treasure of music."

Composer, arranger, and pianist Billy Strayhorn was born on Nov. 29, 1915. The child prodigy was raised in the Homewood district of Pittsburgh where he worked odd jobs to buy a used upright piano while in grade school. Upon his matriculation at Westinghouse High School, Strayhorn began composing pieces and was first pianist for the Senior Orchestra. He even played Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto opus 16 at his high school graduation.

From there, Strayhorn enrolled in the Pittsburgh Musical Institute and began playing at local bars with a combo called the Mad Hatters. At age 19 he composed the music for a comedy musical, *Fantastic Rhythm*. It was during this time that he wrote a song entitled "Life is Lonely" which would become his most noted recording, renamed as "Lush Life." A visit backstage at Pittsburgh's Stanley Theatre where Duke Ellington was about to play his first show would prove to be a turning point in Strayhorn's career. The 23-year-old met Ellington and sang a song he had recently written entitled "Something to Live For." The rest is history.

Strayhorn moved to New York and went on to become Ellington's primary collaborator and arranger, penning songs like "Take the 'A' Train," "Lotus Blossom," "Chelsea Bridge" and "A Flower is a Lovesome Thing." These two musicians shared a unique chemistry, which allowed them to make countless recordings over the next 30 years. But the success Strayhorn achieved with Ellington had its drawbacks.

Working with Ellington forced him to remain in the shadows of the legendary jazz musician. Many of the compositions Strayhorn wrote for Ellington were credited as Strayhorn-Ellington compositions, and some were even credited as Ellington's alone.

Living an openly gay lifestyle did not make Strayhorn's life any easier. Nevertheless, the enigmatic composer lived his life somewhat like a quiet soldier. In a time when people were afraid to be who they truly were, Strayhorn was self-accepting and loved men without shame.

In the 1950s, Strayhorn completed solo albums, revues, and a host of collaborations. Strayhorn worked with the likes of Lena Horne, Pearl Bailey, Johnny Hodges, and Quincy Jones. In 1964, he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, a result of years of smoking and drinking. Strayhorn's last composition, *Blood Count*, was completed while in the hospital. He died in 1967. Later that year, Ellington recorded an album of Strayhorn's material entitled And His Mother Called Him Bill.

Today, Strayhorn's legacy lives on in the music of Ellington and in a host of tribute albums. The most recent such project is *Day Dream: Variations on Strayhorn* (PS Classics) by accomplished Broadway singer-actor Darius de Haas. "I want [Strayhorn] to be remembered as an extraordinary composer in his own right," de Haas said, "He was an unsung hero, a great figure in history who created a great treasure of music."

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"I have read several articles relating to Me'Shell, and what particularly interested me about this article is the 'rawness' and 'realness' that comes across about her and her life's journey."

Love Match

I read your article on Me'Shell Ndegeocello[Vol. 8 No. 3 2002]. She speaks about her relationship with Rebecca Walker. They've been together for a long time and seem to share a soulmate-oriented relationship. I do a lot of research on astrological compatibility between couples. Me'Shell and I share the same zodiac sign (Virgo). I'm very curious to know what Rebecca's is. I've searched every biography for Rebecca Walker published online but have unfortunately been unsuccessful in finding that information on my own. Outside of 1969 and Jackson, Miss., an actual birthdate is never indicated.

I was wondering if you can provide me with the zodiac sign or birthdate of Rebecca Walker. Although I'm sure this request isn't one of your most important ones, it is to me. As an African-American bisexual female Virgo, their love match hits close to home. Thanks in advance for your help. Keep up the good work on the magazine.

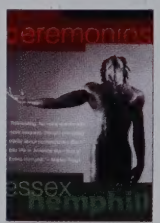
Shaunda Brunston
Via the Internet

Practical Advice

I enjoyed your cover article relating to Ms. Me'Shell. I thought once again you guys did an excellent job in capturing the heart and soul of the individual you interview. I have read several articles relating to Me'Shell, and what particularly interested me about this article is the "rawness" and "realness" that comes across about her and her life's journey. I am sure all who read her story will be enlightened and inspired.

Tiye Lasley,
Executive Director
AALU African American Lesbians United

write a letter, get a book



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Jennifer Holliday

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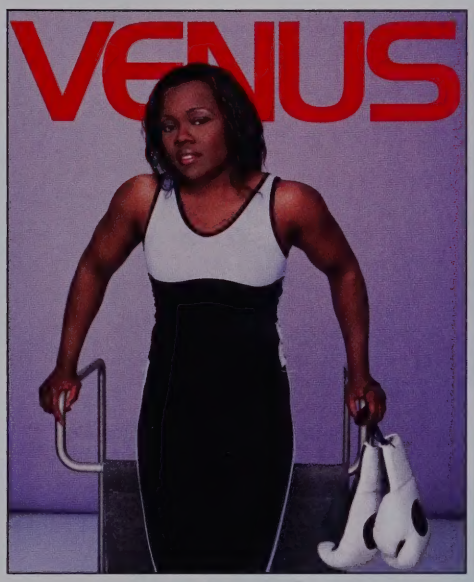

Professional Suicide

In answer to Phil Petrie's question: "Is There A New World Coming for Gay Athletes in Team Sports?" [Vol. 8 No. 2, 2002]

Yes. And that world will be led by athletes with the backbone to debunk the myth that being openly gay is professional suicide. That world will be led by athletes whose sexuality won't matter because they do what team owners and advertisers expect them to do: win.

And if they don't get the endorsements that others get, somehow they'll manage to live the way they did before they turned pro and the way the rest of us do: without them.

Steve Langley
Washington, DC

My Surprise

I just want to thank you again for your support and encouragement of my work as an artist. I have received many reposes due to the feature article in *Venus*. To my surprise many of the straight black-folks at my teaching job read *Venus* Magazine and were talking about the recent issue and the article on Me'Shell Ndegeocello.

I know your work is important to many people and is crossing borders that need crossing.

Zenzele Browne
InTheLightArts.com
New York City, NY

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FOR THE TREATMENT OF HIV

KALETRA is indicated for the treatment of HIV infection in combination with other antiretroviral agents in patients 6 months of age or older. KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing of HIV to others.

Safety Information

KALETRA should not be taken if you have had an allergic reaction to KALETRA or any of its ingredients.

KALETRA must not be taken with certain drugs due to the potential for serious and/or life-threatening side effects. Discuss all medicines, including those without a prescription and herbal preparations, you are taking or plan to take with your doctor or pharmacist.

Pancreatitis and liver problems, which may cause death, have been reported in patients receiving KALETRA. Tell your doctor if you have or have had liver disease such as hepatitis. Your doctor may want to monitor your liver function. In patients taking protease inhibitors, increased bleeding (in patients with hemophilia) and diabetes/high blood sugar have occurred. Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Some patients receiving KALETRA have had large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

The most commonly reported side effects of moderate or severe intensity are: abnormal bowel movements, diarrhea, feeling weak or tired, headache, and nausea. Children most often reported diarrhea, rash, taste aversion, and vomiting.

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol.

Please see adjacent page for Patient Information.

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ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with KALETRA. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

Patient Information

KALETRA™
(kuh-LEE-tra)

Generic Name: lopinavir/ritonavir
(lop-IN-uh-veer/rit-ON-uh-veer)

Read this leaflet carefully before you start taking KALETRA. Also, read it each time you get your KALETRA prescription refilled, in case something has changed. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor when you start this medicine and at check ups. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about KALETRA.

What is KALETRA and how does it work?

KALETRA is a combination of two medicines. They are lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor. KALETRA is always used in combination with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. KALETRA is for adults and for children age 6 months and older.

HIV infection destroys CD4 (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

KALETRA blocks HIV protease, a chemical which is needed for HIV to multiply. KALETRA reduces the amount of HIV in your blood and increases the number of T cells. Reducing the amount of HIV in the blood reduces the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

Does KALETRA cure HIV or AIDS?
KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Does KALETRA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

KALETRA does not reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take KALETRA?

- You should stay under a doctor's care when taking KALETRA. Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- You must take KALETRA every day exactly as your doctor prescribed it. The dose of KALETRA may be different for you than for other patients. Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.
- Dosing in adults (including children 12 years of age and older): The usual dose for adults is 3 capsules (400/100 mg) or 5.0 mL of the oral solution twice a day (morning and night), in combination with other anti-HIV medicines.
- Dosing in children from 6 months to 12 years of age: Children from 6 months to 12 years of age can also take KALETRA. The child's doctor will decide the right dose based on the child's weight.
- Take KALETRA with food to help it work better.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking KALETRA without first talking with your doctor.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- Be sure to set up a schedule and follow it carefully.
- Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give KALETRA to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

What should I do if I miss a dose of KALETRA?

It is important that you do not miss any doses. If you miss a dose of KALETRA, take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

What happens if I take too much KALETRA?

If you suspect that you took more than the prescribed dose of this medicine, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

As with all prescription medicines, KALETRA should be kept out of the reach of young children. KALETRA liquid contains a large amount of alcohol. If a toddler or young child accidentally drinks more than the recommended dose of KALETRA, it could make him/her sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately if this happens.

Who should not take KALETRA?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether KALETRA is right for you.

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. These could cause serious side effects that could cause death. Before you take KALETRA, you must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or are planning to take. These include other prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.

For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please read the section titled "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir or lopinavir.

Can I take KALETRA with other medications?*

KALETRA may interact with other medicines, including those you take without a prescription. You must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or planning to take before you take KALETRA.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA:

- Do not take the following medicines with KALETRA because they can cause serious problems or death if taken with KALETRA.
  - Dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methylergonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, Ergotrate Maleate, Methergine, and others
  - Halcion® (triazolam)
  - Hismanal® (astemizole)
  - Orap® (pimozide)
  - Propulsid® (cisapride)
  - Rythmol® (propafenone)
  - Seldane® (terfenadine)
  - Tambocor™ (flecainide)
  - Versed® (midazolam)
- Do not take KALETRA with rifampin, also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®. Rifampin may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease KALETRA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to KALETRA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV medicines.
- Do not take KALETRA with the cholesterol-lowering medicines Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible serious reactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between KALETRA and Lipitor® (atorvastatin); talk to your doctor before you take any of these cholesterol-reducing medicines with KALETRA.

Medicines that require dosage adjustments:

It is possible that your doctor may need to increase or decrease the dose of other medicines when you are also taking KALETRA. Remember to tell your doctor all medicines you are taking or plan to take.

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with KALETRA, talk to your doctor about problems these two medicines can cause when taken together. You may get increased side effects of VIAGRA, such as low blood pressure, vision changes, and penis erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

- If you are taking oral contraceptives ("the pill") to prevent pregnancy, you should use an additional or different type of contraception since KALETRA may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.
- Efavirenz (Sustiva™) or nevirapine (Viramune®) may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood. Your doctor may increase your dose of KALETRA if you are also taking efavirenz or nevirapine.
- If you are taking Mycobutin® (rifabutin), your doctor will lower the dose of Mycobutin.
- **A change in therapy should be considered if you are taking KALETRA with:**
  Phenobarbital
  Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
  Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)
  These medicines may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- **Other Special Considerations:**
  KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take metronidazole or disulfiram. Severe nausea and vomiting can occur.
- **If you are taking both didanosine (Videx®) and KALETRA:**
  Didanosine (Videx®) should be taken one hour before or two hours after KALETRA.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

- This list of side effects is **not** complete. If you have questions about side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You should report any new or continuing symptoms to your doctor right away. Your doctor may be able to help you manage these side effects.
- The most commonly reported side effects of moderate severity that are thought to be drug related are: abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache, and nausea. Children taking KALETRA may sometimes get a skin rash.
- Blood tests in patients taking KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Liver problems including death have occurred in patients taking KALETRA. In studies, it is unclear if KALETRA caused these liver problems because some patients had other illnesses or were taking other medicines.
- Some patients taking KALETRA can develop serious problems with their pancreas (pancreatitis), which may cause death. You have a higher chance of having pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occur in patients taking protease inhibitors such as KALETRA. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients need changes in their diabetes medicine. Others needed new diabetes medicine.
- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors.
- There have been other side effects in patients taking KALETRA. However, these side effects may have been due to other medicines that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Some of these side effects can be serious.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

- *If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant:* The effects of KALETRA on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known.
- *If you are breast-feeding:* Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that HIV can be transmitted through breast-feeding.
- *If you have liver problems:* If you have liver problems or are infected with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, you should tell your doctor before taking KALETRA.
- *If you have diabetes:* Some people taking protease inhibitors develop new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you have diabetes or an increase in thirst or frequent urination.
- *If you have hemophilia:* Patients taking KALETRA may have increased bleeding.

How do I store KALETRA?

- Keep KALETRA and all other medicines out of the reach of children.
- Refrigerated KALETRA capsules and oral solution remain stable until the expiration date printed on the label. If stored at room temperature up to 77°F (25°C), KALETRA capsules and oral solution should be used within 2 months.
- Avoid exposure to excessive heat.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

General advice about prescription medicines:

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider if you have any questions about this medicine or your condition. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information Leaflet. If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you information about this medicine that was written for health care professionals. Do not use this medicine for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share this medicine with other people.

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Revised: January, 2002

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features

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95 Death of a Poetic Genius
Prolific poet and educator June Jordan died last June, just a year and a half after writer Shirlette Ammons sat in on one of Jordan's classes at the University of California at Berkeley. Ammons remembers inspirational moments from that day with Jordan and pays tribute to an almost unsung hero in the African American struggle.

Maisha Yearwood

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Lester Cohen/Wireimage

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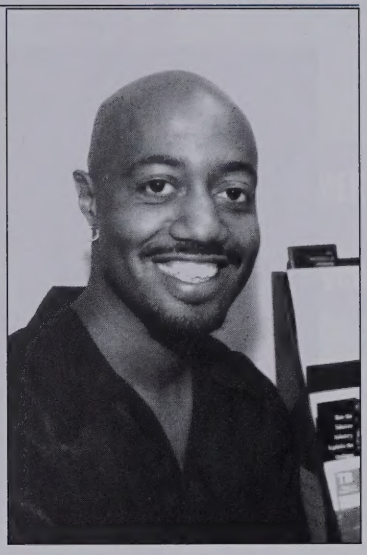
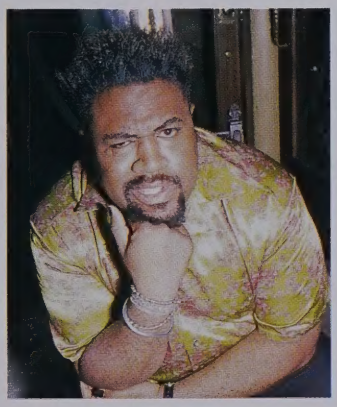
98 Legendary
Composer and pianist Billy Strayhorn was more than just Duke Ellington's primary collaborator. Venus remembers the life and contributions of an openly-gay musician.

Elyce Strong is an aspiring television writer, living in Los Angeles. She was raised in Memphis, Tenn., attended Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga., and worked in news for many years after graduation. She soon tired of news and began investigating dramatic television writing, which lead to her move to the West Coast. Currently, she works as an assistant to Emmy Award-winning writer David Mills (HBO's *The Corner, NYPD Blue, ER*). Author of *The Top 20 Black Icons*, pg. 36, Elyce says, "This list of Who's Who make me proud to be Black! It's a potpourri of impressive personalities of our parent's generation, ours, and our children's."



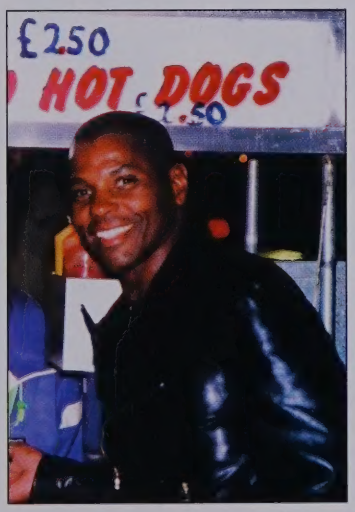
Craig Washington was born and lovingly raised by Anna and Leon Washington in Queens, New York and has lived in Atlanta for 10 years. His writings have been published in Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Arise, Clikque, and Southern Voice. He currently serves as executive director for the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Center. Check his story Stand up & Represent on pg. 75

Anderson Jones is based in Los Angeles, where he met bicoastal Maisha Yearwood. [see pg. 60.] Jones writes Movie Scoop, a weekly column about movie industry news and buzz for E! Online. "I think she's an inspiration for all of us Black folks in entertainment," he says. Jones has worked for the Detroit Free News, Philadelphia Inquirer and freelanced for Entertainment Weekly, The New York Times. He's also published Men Together, a photo-essay book that documents gay men in long-term relationships.



Shirlette Ammons is a writer of working class currently residing in Raleigh, N.C. "I draw strength from June Jordan's quote, 'A woman's body is the universal shelter.' It inspires me to rely on that salient space, which is my spiritual artsource." Shirlette's first book of poetry entitled, Stumphole: Anthology of Backwoods Blood, was released this summer (www.stumphole.com). She is also the bassist/vocalist for the Raleigh-based band, stumP. Read her tribute to Jordan on pg. 95

Michael K. Watts serves as 'Guest Editor' for this issue of Venus, playing an integral role in the cover story on Black Icons. Michael's nine-year background as an entertainment journalist for FOX and MTV helped make this month's task a breeze. "Our staff had a hard time narrowing the pool down to just 20 icons. There are so many who have touched our lives in so many ways," Michael says. He also wrote the recent cover stories on Meshell Ndegeocello and Veronica Simmons. Michael resides in New York City.



Michael A. Adams cruises through the streets, shops, spas and restaurants in London and sends us the 411 on where and how the British get down. With his own new travel television pilot in the editing room this 'prince of travel' is always on the go but never too busy to keep VENUS readers in the know.

publisher's note

Jena Jones

It's been a long time coming, but we finally get to collectively say, "Bravo!" to 20 of our favorite Black icons. Their names are household words but to Black gay folks, they are even more special either because of the support they have shown our community or because of their sheer fabulousness. Elyce Strong and Michael K. Watts had a tough time keeping the list to 20. (See if you agree with the mostly entertainer-filled list, page 40.) Then it's on to Hollywood where screenwriter Maisha Yearwood talks to E! Entertainment's Andy Jones about her career and the success she is enjoying, in "Power of the Pitch," on page 56.

Any day is World AIDS day when you are infected with or threatened by the virus. Our special section on AIDS in the African-American community brings awareness through features on Bishop Rainey Cheeks, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and an eye-opening story that will bring sistahs out of denial about their "down-low" men, page 66. Enjoy the issue!

Charlene Cothran

VENUS

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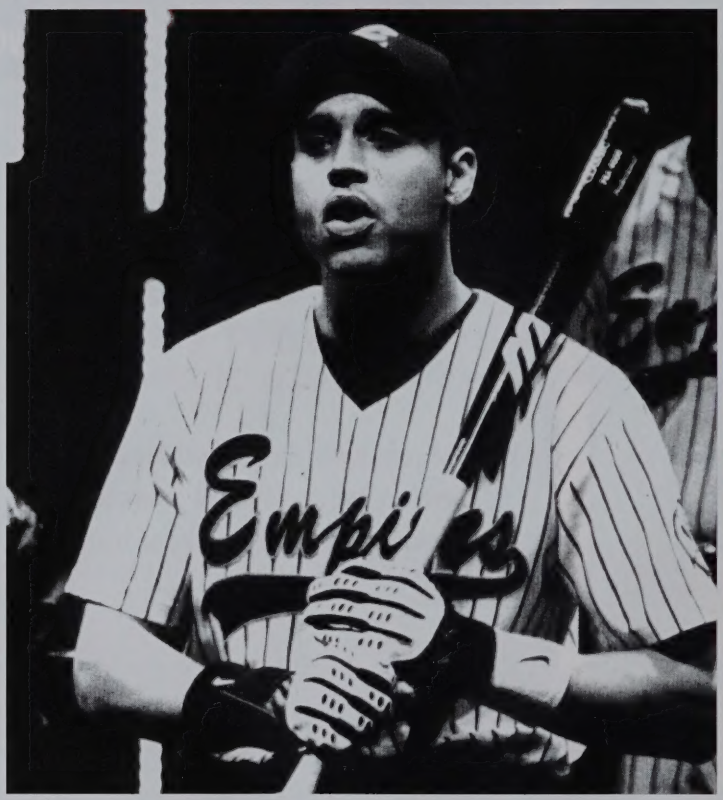

An openly gay playa bats with no shame in his game

words by Steve Langley

"At a news conference at the peak of his Major League Baseball career, Darren Lemming comes out swinging and not both ways, either. He coyly reveals that, off the field, he bats only with the boys."

At a news conference at the peak of his Major League Baseball career, Darren Lemming comes out swinging—and not both ways, either. He coyly reveals that off the field he bats only with the boys.

This bombshell comes in the early innings of *Take Me Out*, the new Richard Greenberg play that premiered in London and runs through Oct. 27 at the Joseph Papp Public Theater in New York.

We don't see Darren wrestle with whether or how he should break the news. No rumors, jilted lover or tabloid photos force him out. He just does it.

And why shouldn't he? The product of a white mother and a Black father, Darren is high yella, fine, buffed, butch, brilliant, widely praised and highly paid. Whom shall he fear? God? As far as he's concerned, he is God.

Such confidence keeps his teammates on their heels. Darren's presence in the shower gives them the creeps—even when he's not there. Since much of the story takes place in the locker room, there is ample nudity amid this multiracial cast—though size queens will not be impressed.

But for all the nakedness and sexual subtext, orchestrated for maximum effect by director Joe Mantello, there is no romance and no sex, at least not consensual. Darren (played with virile aloofness by Daniel Sunjata) talks a good game, but never about his love life. His homosexuality, evidently, is all in his head. In one bizarre twist, he sexually assaults a racist, homo-hating redneck relief pitcher in the shower, more out of anger than lust.

Two-thirds into this three-hour saga, Shane Mungit, the relief pitcher from the minor leagues, steals the spotlight, mainly because of the trouble he ignites. At this point, the play loses focus. Apparently for Greenberg, a gay dramatist who became obsessed with baseball three years ago, the story isn't about Darren or Shane. It's about the grand ole game.

Steve Langley is a playwright living in Washington, D.C. His latest work, Cut/Uncut, received a staged reading this summer at The Kennedy Center.

SAFETY INFORMATION

- COMBIVIR does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others
- COMBIVIR should be used with other HIV medicines
- Make sure to see your doctor regularly because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells
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Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR. Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your doctor. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC®] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) Tablets [ZDV], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (la-MIV-u-deen) and zidovudine (Zi-DOHV-u-deen), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and either two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine (also known as EPIVIR or 3TC) or zidovudine (also known as RETROVIR or ZDV).

Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR, or TRIZIVIR® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine.

Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

If you are 65 years of age or over, consult your healthcare professional about the functioning of your liver, kidneys, and heart; about other illnesses you may suffer from, and about any other medications you may be taking. It is possible that the dosage may need to be modified.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

Talk to your healthcare provider if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry: 1-800-258-4263.
- You are breast-feeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breast-feed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.

Also talk to your doctor about:

- Problems with your blood counts.
- Problems with your muscles.
- Problems with your kidneys.
- Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes. COMBIVIR can be taken with most other medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects occurring in 5% or more of patients included: muscle and joint pain, headache, nausea, weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion.

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported rarely with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted; your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience. Although it may make you healthier, COMBIVIR does not cure HIV.

Safety Information

Make sure to see your doctor regularly, because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells. A buildup of acid in the blood, and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen. The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose.

Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.

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This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

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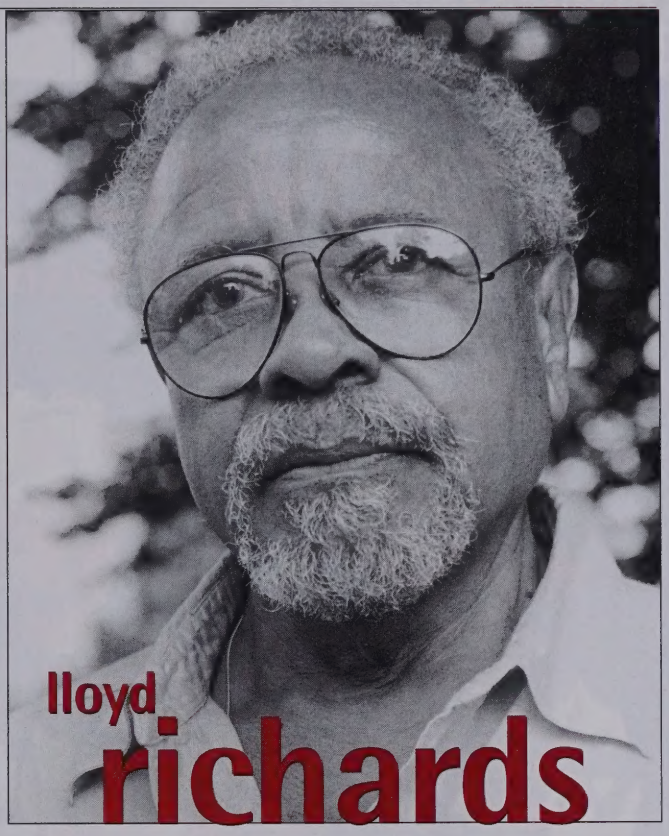
Tony award-winning director and drama innovator, Lloyd Richards is one of the pioneers of African-American Theatre and the winner of this year's Gish Prize.



One of the most revered pioneers of American Theatre, Tony Award-winning director and Yale University professor emeritus Lloyd Richards, will be presented with this year's Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for his part in shaping modern theater and guiding some of the today's leading voices to the stage. Richards will receive the honor—a silver medallion and approximately $200,000—at an awards ceremony held at the Hudson Theatre, Millennium Broadway, New York City this Fall.

In over 40 years of work, Richards has discovered and nurtured countless new playwrights, and staged some of the country's most significant stories, giving theatergoers an ever-changing and challenging perspective on life. He was instrumental in the ground-breaking introduction of the African-American voice to Broadway, making history in 1959 as the first Black director of the first Black drama by the first Black woman playwright on the Great Way. Over the years he's continued to expand the African-American experience onstage, working with talents like Sidney Poitier and August Wilson. Offstage, Richards made his mark by setting the standard for new play development with his staged readings at the National Playwright's Conference. At Yale, he brought his innovative techniques to drama education, experimenting and introducing his students to new plays and ideas. In 1993, Richards was recognized with the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest honor for the arts.

crowns
celebrates fashion & faith

Lynda Gravatt, Lillias White, and Harriet D. Foy in Crowns. photo by T. Charles Erickson

regina taylor gets a nod from the AMEN corner

review by Charlene Cothran

You late, chile!" exclaimed Mother Katherine Taylor to a friend who recently presented her with the calendar version of Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry's book *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats.* The moment I saw the calendar 2 years ago, I knew I HAD to send it to her because she's a virtual twin to the woman on the cover. This only goes to prove that there's a Mother Taylor in every black [Baptist] Church. You know her . . . She proudly sits in the same spot, on the same pew every Sunday. Toes tapping out praise in spiked-healed paten-leather pumps and matching bag, dainty gloves and a Holy Ghost hanky spread across her lap. Her gorgeous silky brown skin is God-like and her perfectly rose colored lips are always perched with a hymn and testimony on the tip of her tongue. Oh, and, each and every Sunday she is crowned in one of her many fashionable hats.

Regina Taylor nostalgically gives homage to these women we all know and love. Her adaptation of *Crowns* for stage is an electrifying celebration of spirit, history, sorority and style.

Hats off to the casting director who lined up the very best in the business to bring us 90 minutes of sheer pride and joy. Complimenting each other in vocal and dramatic skill, are Lillias White (Velma), Ebony Jo-Ann (Mother Shaw), Janet Hubert (Wanda), Lynda Gravatt (Mabel), Carmen Ruby Floyd (Yolanda), Harriet D. Foy (Jeanette) and Lawrence Clayton (the man). Spirit-filled choreography by Ronald K. Brown keeps the revival moving as the characters musically and hilariously share memories, life lessons, and of course, 'the rules' for wearing a crown.

Flawless costumes by Emilio Sosa get a resounding 'AMEN' and the percussion by David Pleasant, who is excellent on tambourine and congos, is worthy of the highest praise. Now playing at Second Stage Theatre in New York City, call Walk Tall Girl Productions, Inc. at 718.919-5553 for group discount tickets.

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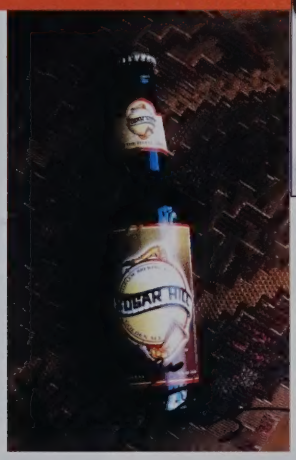
Celeste E. Beatty, chief executive officer of Harlem Brewing Co.



sugar hill golden ale

Launched to a New York and New Jersey public last summer, Harlem Brewing Co.'s Sugar Hill Golden Ale is microbrew ale described by *The New York Times* as "coppery-colored and fairly full-bodied but refreshing, with a nice hint of bitter orange in its finish."

"In some ways it's similar to the beer that the great kings and queens of Africa brewed," said Celeste E. Beatty, chief executive officer of the Black-owned business she founded in November 2000. The popularity of the brand in the Northeast region of the states has prompted interest in the product in other parts of the world. This fall, Sugar Hill Golden Ale will be available in Japan. In Washington, D.C., the National Democratic Club, a restaurant with private membership is interested in selling the beer to its customers.

Pete Arnold, general manager of the operation, described Sugar Hill Golden Ale as a "smooth, good-tasting product."

"And I'm not really crazy about a lot of microbrews," he said.

While passionate about running the Harlem Brewing Co., Beatty is more excited about re-establishing a legacy that started in Africa and breaking the stigma between Blacks and beer.

"I have a responsibility to reconnect [Blacks] to that heritage," she said. "[Africans] were, in fact, great brewers. And they did not brew malt liquor."

"I have a responsibility to reconnect [Blacks] to that heritage," she said. "[Africans] were, in fact, great brewers. And they did not brew malt liquor."

In the United States, Blacks are frequently associated with malt liquor, a drink that tends to contain, according to Beatty, unhealthy ingredients. Beatty notes that companies promoting such a product have targeted Blacks, especially in the advertisements.

Not only does the brewing business in the United States misrepresent Blacks, she said, but it also underrepresents the presence of Blacks or the ancient Africans' influence on brewing.

"You never hear about Blacks," she said.

Of course, there is the exception. Beatty said she was surprised to see a Black guy in a Sam Adams commercial some time ago.

—Jerry Daniels Jr.

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words by Michael Andre Adams

Ask the average African American to share his or her perception of Milwaukee and the word segregation is bound to come up. However, before you miss, diss, or dismiss Milwaukee, here's the scoop on two fabulous restaurants owned by people of color.

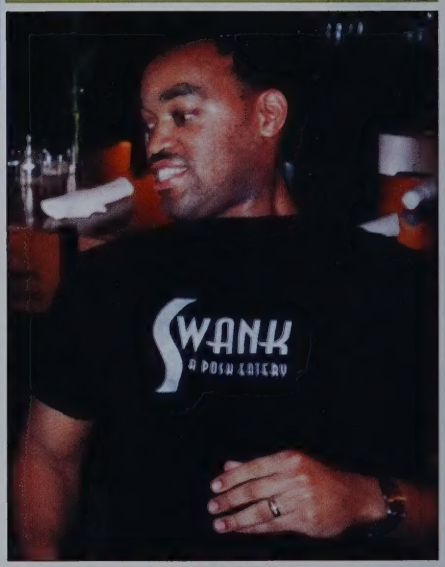
Best described as a light eatery with an upscale appeal, Milwaukee's SWANK is posh, chic, and finger lickin' good on the real. The downtown delight opened just this past January. Founded by siblings Trevor and Kai Trimble and cousin Shannon Brown, it's more than a Black thing, it's a family affair.

The most requested items on the menu include sesame-crusted scallops served with a mango puree, salmon steak with Thai sauce, and the Shrimp Po' Boy Sandwich. The crab cakes burst apart with real—as opposed to imitation—crabmeat, less the doughy filler. The granddaddy of them all is The Grand Swank, a multitiered and towering Epicurean delight for the true seafood lover. It starts out with shrimp, muscles, and crab claws on top, ending with a tempura-like batter-fried shrimp, scallops, and calamari below. If you like crispy catfish, you'll love theirs. And by all means, hit the Flourless Chocolate Cake for dessert. Your waistline may not thank you, but your soul definitely will.

Delectable flourless chocolate cake with fresh mint garnish.

Getting There:

Swank is located at 628 N. Water St. in the heart of Milwaukee, WI Private rooms and catering available. Lunch: 11-2 p.m. (M-F), Dinner: 5-10 p.m. (M-Th) till midnight Fri & Sat. Average ticket $10/lunch, $20/dinner with beverage (excluding alcohol). 414/27-SWANK; www.swankeatery.com.



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[l-r] Blake Kimbrough-Curator, "Artist Showcase Series" of New York City; featured artists Otto Neals and Ann Tanksley [whose painting is display at left]; Melvin Marshall Curator and Executive Producer.

a lesson in marshall arts

Art Collector Challenges African Americans to Start Owning Their Own Culture

Melvin A. Marshall has a mission: To guide African Americans to better appreciate their rich visual artistic history. To this end, he has started a national art tour to introduce and enlighten the significant contributions that artists of African descent have made to our national, visual, artistic culture.

This year, Marshall, 36, has inaugurated his Artist Showcase Series in New York City. The exhibit he says "was a big success." The showcase is a traveling national art series that highlights significant accomplishments of five 20th century artists of African descent. The exhibit in New York City included important paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by master artists Ann Tanksley and Otto Neals, and works by contemporary artists Cheryl Warrick, Francks Francois Deceus, and Willie Torbert. Marshall plans to showcase additional artists as he travels to different cities around the country.

Consistent with Marshall's vision of educating the public, the showcase will provide an opportunity for collectors to learn about and better appreciate the contributions made by these visual artists to their cultural legacy. The show will continue to Los Angeles during the week of Nov. 3, 2002, and will stop in Chicago, San Francisco, Detroit, and Washington D.C., among other cities.

"I first started buying art when I left college in the late 1980s and have been collecting ever since," Marshall said. He adds that collecting art has been a history lesson on a part of his Black culture that seems to be largely ignored: "the importance of artists of African descent to the international art scene."

"In addition, I am just beginning to fully appreciate the significant contributions that many other artists have made and are currently making. One such man is the master artist, author, curator, and educator Dr. David C. Driskell." Driskell, Marshall explains, "is our national treasure in the art world. "He has received many prestigious accolades and awards, including the National Medal of the Arts from President Clinton, for a lifetime of excellence and achievement in the arts. "We have not properly documented the vast importance of Dr. Driskell's influence on the art world over the past 45 to 50 years." Driskell was also Marshall's honorary guest at the inaugural event.

But Marshall's personal history may be as fascinating as the many artists that he is so dedicated to teaching us about. He is a native of New Orleans, and moved with his family to the San Francisco Bay area at the age of 11. Upon graduating from a top college preparatory school, Marshall enrolled in the College of Chemistry at

> "African-American art [is] undervalued, certainly underappreciated and most likely a good investment."

the University of California at Berkeley. After spearheading a successful campaign to establish a credit union—the first of its kind for students and faculty at Berkeley—Marshall discovered that he had an interest and a talent for things financial. After college he headed for Wall Street for a career in finance, where he joined J.P. Morgan & Co. as a Foreign Currency Trader. As part of his duties, Marshall spent long stints working in Europe. Marshall was impressed with the quality and number of fine museums he visited in Europe, noting,

"The Europeans, it seemed to me, had such a high respect for art, and modern European masters such as Picasso garnered inspiration from the so-called 'primitive' art of Africa. When I thought about both Picasso's many forays to the Trocadero, the ethnological museum in Paris, as well as the fact that Europe recognized that jazz was an art form at a time when America viewed it as merely dissolute, I experienced an epiphany: African-American art [is] undervalued, certainly underappreciated and most likely a good investment."

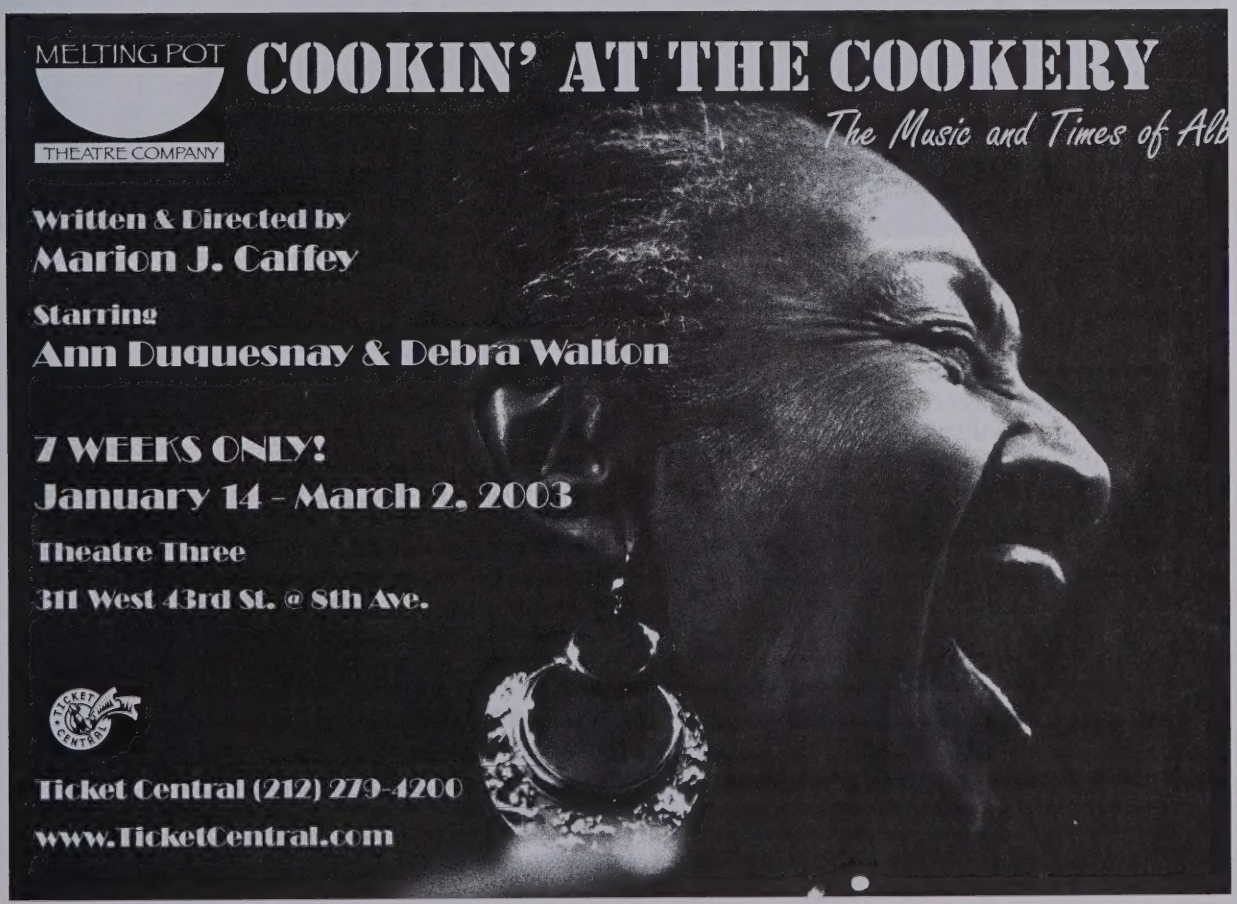
Marshall became an avid collector of African-American art, acquiring an impressive collection, which includes such masters as William H. Johnson, Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence. In a move that shocked his friends and family, Marshall left a burgeoning career on Wall Street in order to form two small companies, Marshall Arts, Ltd. and Hidden Heritage Productions, both of whose mission is to highlight the works of unknown, but important, African-American artists. Soon Marshall was lecturing at the Smithsonian and assisting his mentor, the late Thurlow Evans Tibbs Jr., in appraising art. Marshall and his business partner, Blake Kimbrough, catalogued the collection that Tibbs bequeathed to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., a vast collection containing 20,000 items representing over 600 artists.

Marshall is currently a museum curator and director on the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporian Arts (MoCADA) in Brooklyn, NY. He is very busy these days, acting as curator, lecturer and researcher. He is next co-curating an exhibit at MoCADA on the history of the African American master printmakers to open this fall.

He has also recently published an article in the International Review of African-American Art and is collaborating with the Hampton University Museum on a traveling museum exhibition featuring the works of Charles Sebree. Marshall has done ground-breaking research on Sebree and has discovered over 150 pieces of his artwork.

"Thornton Wilder discovered him; Gertrude Stein collected him; Pablo Picasso commented favorably on his work, and yet America knows very little about Charles Sebree, a man who helped to launch the careers of Harry Belafonte and Eartha Kitt and encouraged Toni Morrison to be a writer," Marshall lamented. "As the owner of his most significant work of the World War II era, I feel it is my duty to inform America about this unknown master."

For information on his upcoming traveling exhibit and art shows, please visit his Web site at www.MMFineArts.com.



Sleek & Stylish
The sleek look is hot. For homeowners who crave a modern look, the Luxury Series built-in refrigerator is a perfect complement to Jenn-Air's ultra-sleek stainless double wall oven and six-burner gas cooktop. Visit www.jennair.com for more info.

test your kitchen personality

Planning your dream kitchen? Take this quiz to help confirm your cooking needs and style preferences. Your score will serve as a guide to help you select appliances and kitchen designs that express you. Circle the letter that best describes your lifestyle.

When you entertain, you are most likely to:

A. Try a trendy recipe you've just read about.
B. Recreate a favorite recipe your mother used to make.
C. Create an entirely new recipe from scratch.

When eating out with friends, you are most likely to:

A. Enjoy an elegant meal in a gourmet restaurant.
B. Have burgers and malts at a '50s diner.
C. Find an off-the-beaten-path cafe that serves authentic Asian.

At gatherings, you generally like to:

A. Be the life of the party.
B. Work behind the scenes and then watch guests enjoy.
C. Be the official social director, bringing interesting people together.

When you cook for yourself, you're likely to:

A. Concoct tasty creations based on what you have on hand.
B. Make comfort food.
C. Try an elaborate recipe that you've never tried before.

Built-in Beauty
With the introduction of the Luxury Series, Jenn-Air now offers a complete line of built-in appli-cances for the first time. Coupled with a Pro-Style double wall oven and ProStyle cooktop, this delux look offers exactly what homeowners want . . . style and function!

When you shop for clothes, you are more likely to purchase:
A. The latest styles on the runways.
B. Classics that never go out of style.
C. Items and accessories to create unexpected combinations.

When you travel, you are most likely to choose:
A. A luxurious resort in a popular, exotic location.
B. A "See America" trip that includes tours of historic locations.
C. An adventure vacation, such as mountain climbing or rafting.

Your favorite colors are:
A. Classic, stylish neutrals.
B. Restful colors that make you feel cozy and comfortable.
C. Energizing colors that make you feel creative and alive.

You can't resist buying things that make you feel:
A. Stylish and sophisticated.
B. Efficient and practical.
C. Up-to-date on the latest technologies.

Which do you like most about yourself?
A. Your looks.
B. Your intelligence.
C. Your creativity.

You prefer to spend your free time:
A. With friends who appreciate your sense of style.
B. Relaxing at home with your family.
C. Meeting new people and exploring new places.

SCORING

If you answered mostly with the letter "A," you may have a contemporary kitchen personality. You enjoy the latest styles and trends. You enjoy the newest, most interesting foods. You enjoy surrounding yourself with people and things that reflect your unique sense of style. Your ideal kitchen would include a double wall oven and a sleek downdraft cooktop.

If you answered mostly with the letter "B," you may have a traditional kitchen personality. Your home is the center of your universe. You enjoy foods that evoke family traditions, and you also enjoy creating traditions of your own. You like to surround yourself with people and things that make you and your family feel a sense of warmth and comfort. Your dream kitchen could very well include a slide-in range or a new conventional gas cooktop.

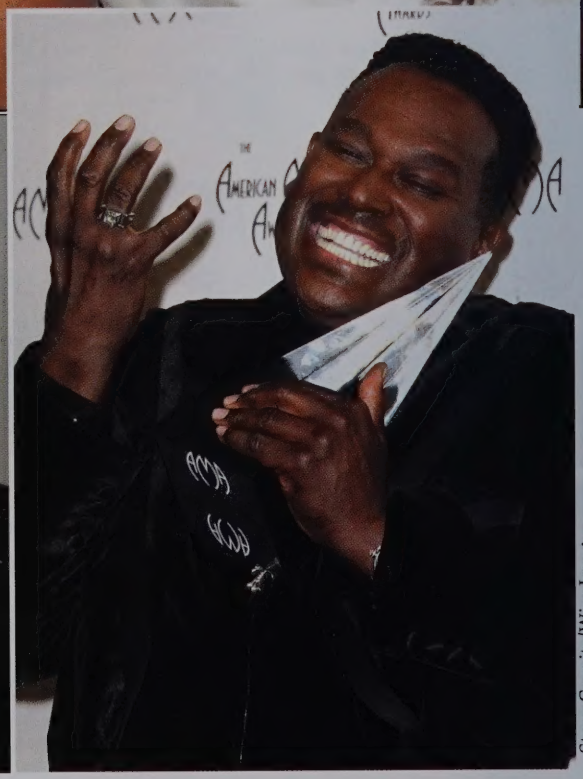
If you answered mostly with the letter "C," you may have a stainless kitchen personality. You are a chef in the truest sense of the word. When it comes to cooking, you enjoy creating innovative new recipes that delight your guests. You like to try the untried, experiment with exotic new combinations and test your creativity. You want high-performance appliances with the latest technologies that enable you to do your best work. Some of your appliance favorites might be a dual-fuel range or a downdraft cooktop.

House Beautiful

Proud of the work you've done on your home? We're looking for black gay homeowners with fabulous interiors designs to feature in an upcoming issue. Email us at thecamp@venusmagazine.com.

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image



Steve Granitz/Wire Image

The 20 Hottest Black icons & Why We Love Them

They turn it out. They turn us on. They serve on-camera and behind the scenes. They are icons for the Black gay community. In this issue, Venus highlights the careers of 20 public figures who are highly revered by Black gays and lesbians. While these icons are not gay, they all have made a special connection with our community through their work, words, and actions. So, as Venus salutes these icons, check out their stories, their claims to fame, and how they continue to turn heads.

words by Elyce Strong
edited by Michael K. Watts

Michael Caulfield/WireImage

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Oprah Winfrey

Claim to Fame Queen of Talk
Why We Love Her Because she recommends some great books. The country started reading again after her now-defunct Oprah's Book Club began in 1996. And because her magazine, *O*, is just the truth.
No She Didn't! Remain single all these years! Will she and Stedman ever get married? It has been 17 years, and we are just dying for the wedding of the century!
Yes She Did! Turn her post-show online gab-fest into a prime-time coda to her talk show called *Oprah After the Show* on the Oxygen cable network. The show fulfills her obligations as a partner in the network and allows her to retain her talk show master tapes, which she had previously relinquished.

Oprah spent her early years with her grandmother on a farm in Kosciusko, Miss., then with her mother in Milwaukee. She suffered abuse and molestation, so she was sent to live under her father's strict discipline in Nashville, which proved to be exactly what she needed. She attended Tennessee State University and began reporting at a local station in Nashville. She finally ended up in Chicago hosting WLS-TV's *AM Chicago*. A year later, it was the hottest show in town and in 1985 was renamed *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Oprah has received countless Daytime Emmy awards, and she has gone on to star in *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*, as well as produce film and television projects. Today, she is chairman of Harpo, Inc. and a modest billionaire. Oprah recently received the first-ever Bob Hope Humanitarian Award at the 54th Annual Emmy Awards. Her acceptance speech spoke volumes: "The guy on the street, the woman in the classroom, the Israeli, the Afghani, the Zuni, the Apache, the Irish, the Protestant, the Catholic, the gay, the straight, you, me—we all just want to know that we matter."

Maya Angelou

Claim to Fame One of the greatest writers of contemporary literature.
Why We Love Her Because inspiration flows like a river from her pen and her mouth. And she has a story for everything!
No She Didn't! Learn to speak five languages fluently: English, Spanish, French, Italian, and West African Fanti. (And some of us have trouble mastering the Queen's English!)
Yes She Did! Release her latest book this past spring, *A Song Flung Up to Heaven*, the sixth installment of her autobiography, which began over 30-years ago.

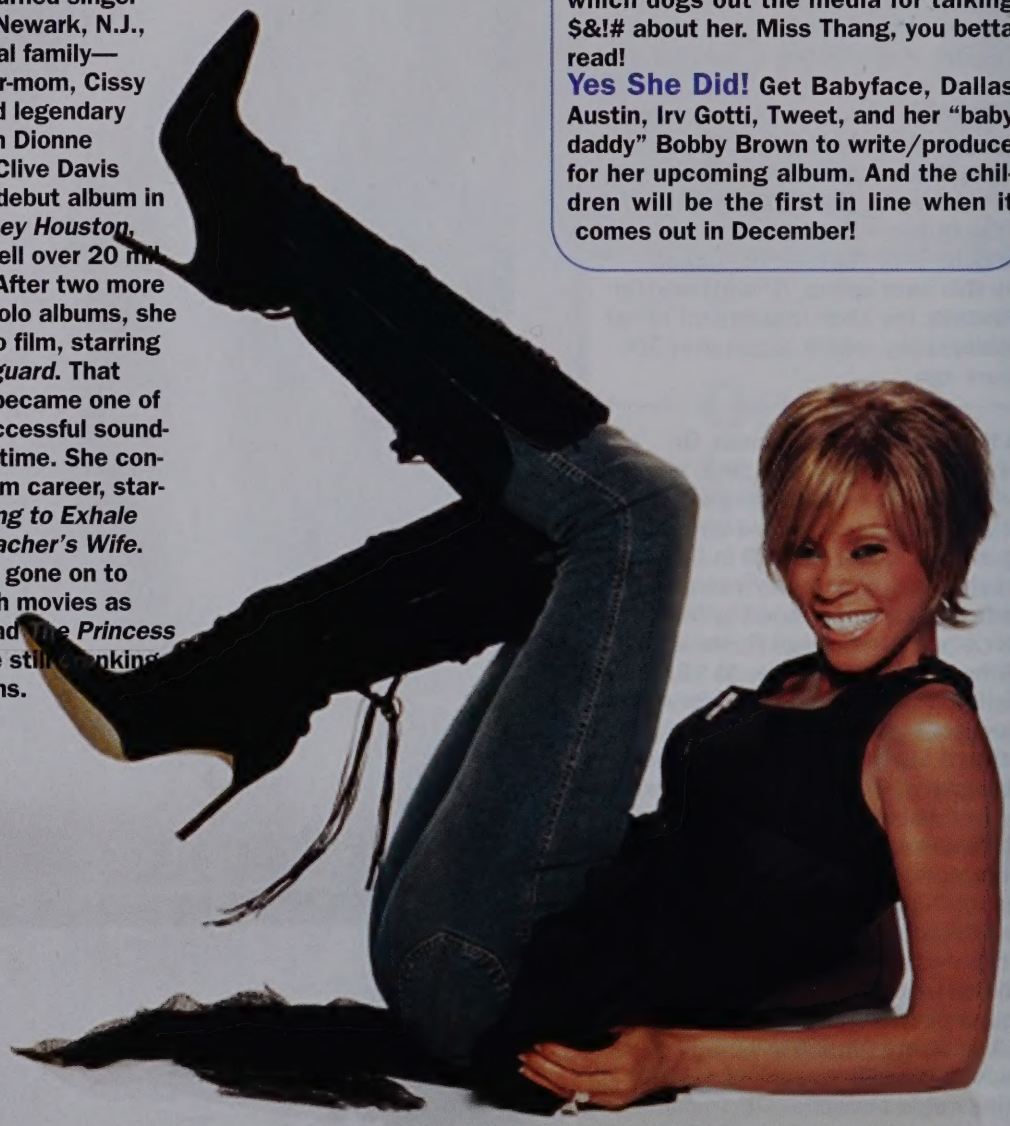
A true renaissance woman, Dr. Maya Angelou is a dancer, poet, educator, historian, author, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer, and director. Born Marguerite Johnson in 1928 in St. Louis, she spent most of her early years in rural Arkansas. After being raped by her mother's boyfriend at age 8, she did not speak for almost five years. At 16, she had her first child. These early events sparked her best-selling book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first of her six-part autobiography. She has gone on to write a total of 10 books, numerous poems, including the well-known *Phenomenal Woman*, and many plays and essays. In 1993, President Clinton asked her to write and recite an original work for his inauguration, making her only the second poet in U.S. history to have such an honor. In 1998, she made her directing debut with *Down In the Delta*, starring Alfre Woodard. Last spring, Angelou debuted her own line of Hallmark greeting cards and gifts, Life Mosaic, giving fans a chance to use her words to touch and inspire each other.

R J Capak/Wire Image

Whitney Houston

Claim to Fame Her soul-wrenching voice and her perfect pearly whites.
Why We Love Her There are no fronts, no airs. The ghetto-fabulous diva and down-ass chick will fight you in her Bob Mackey gown if she has to! And anyone who would call her husband her "baby daddy" in Carnegie Hall is alright with us!
No She Didn't! Record a song on her new album called "Whatcha Lookin' At," which dogs out the media for talking $&!# about her. Miss Thang, you betta read!
Yes She Did! Get Babyface, Dallas Austin, Irv Gotti, Tweet, and her "baby daddy" Bobby Brown to write/produce for her upcoming album. And the children will be the first in line when it comes out in December!

This model turned singer was born in Newark, N.J., into a musical family—gospel-singer-mom, Cissy Houston, and legendary singer-cousin Dionne Warwick. A Clive Davis prodigy, her debut album in 1985, *Whitney Houston*, went on to sell over 20 million copies. After two more successful solo albums, she ventured into film, starring in *The Bodyguard*. That soundtrack became one of the most successful soundtracks of all time. She continued her film career, starring in *Waiting to Exhale* and *The Preacher's Wife*. Houston has gone on to produce such movies as *Cinderella* and *The Princess Dairies* while still cranking out hit albums.

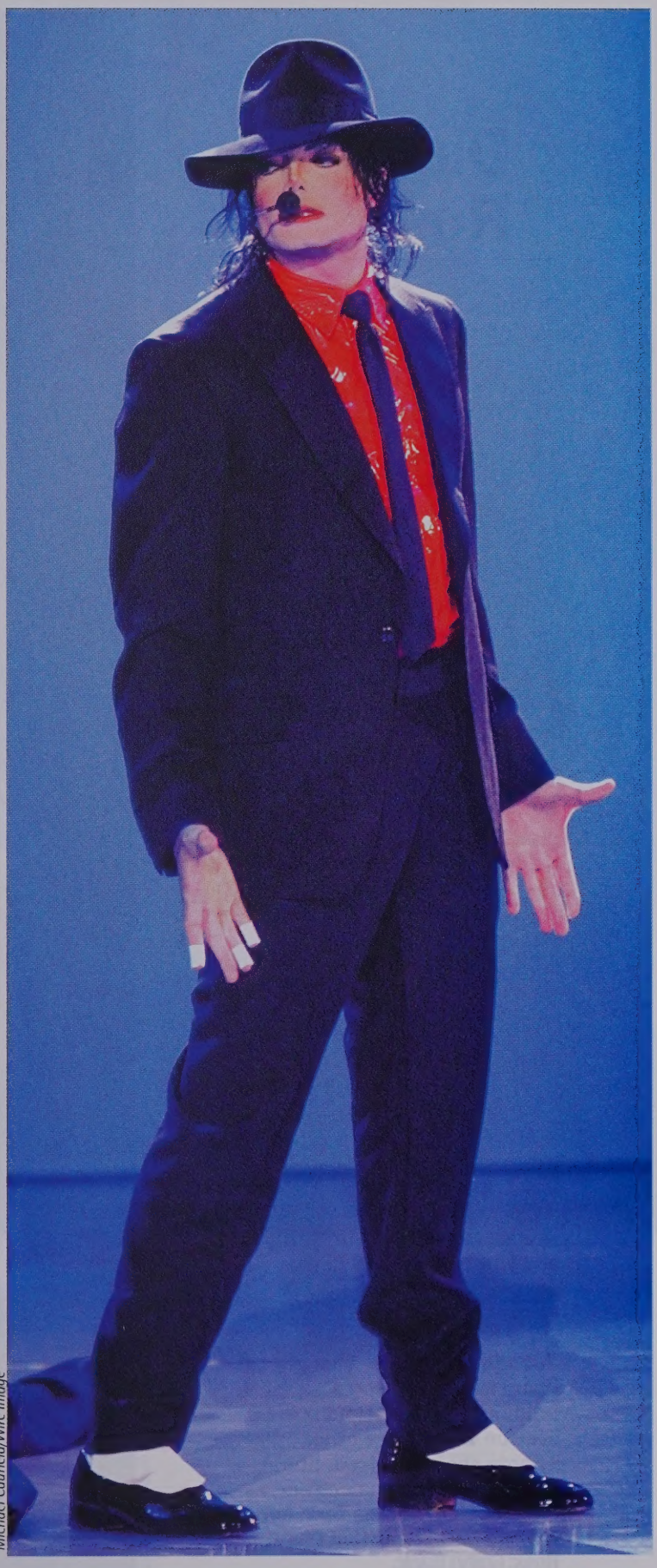


Michael Jackson

Claim to Fame King of Pop
Why We Love Him His glove, moonwalking, grabbing his crotch, saying, "Chamon." The list goes on and on.
No He Didn't! Accuse Tommy Mottola, chairman of Sony Music, of being a racist. Siting poor promotion of his *Invincible* album, Michael engaged in a heated dispute with his Sony label, Epic, earlier this year. Now, he is on a crusade to "heal" the music industry and protect the rights of recording artists. Alright! Michael the activist!
Yes He Did! Have a cameo in last summer's much-anticipated film, *Men in Black II*, playing Agent M. We had not seen Michael on the big-screen since *The Wiz*!

Born in Gary, In., Michael found himself leading his singing brothers in The Jackson Five by the time he was four. They became one of the biggest groups of the 1970s. In 1979, he released *Off The Wall*, earning him his first Grammy, three American Music Awards, and jump-starting his amazing solo career. In 1983, he released *Thriller*, which won eight Grammy awards, eight American Music Awards, and became the biggest-selling album of all time, selling more than 46 million copies worldwide.

His next albums, *Bad* and *Dangerous* both achieved more than seven times platinum status, but Michael soon found himself in the news for other reasons. He married Lisa Marie Presley, divorced her, and remarried another woman whom he's had two children with. His latest album, *Invincible*, was released last year.

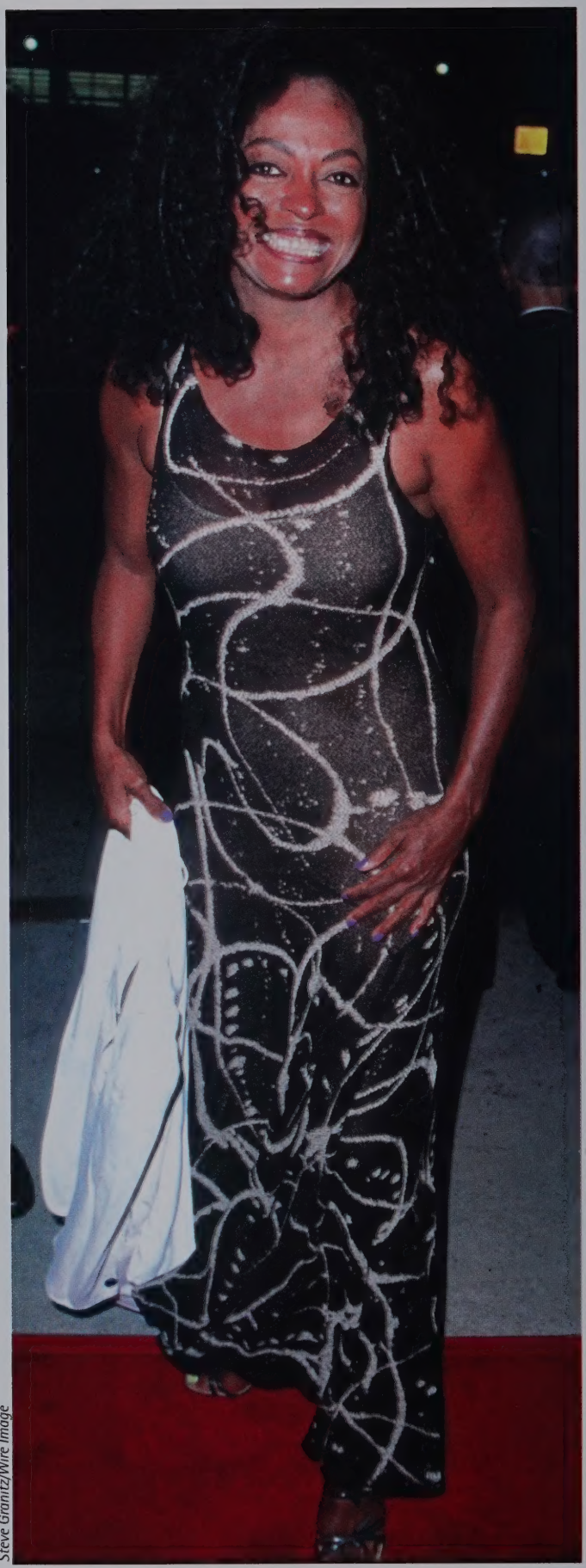


Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Diana Ross

Claim to Fame She's the consummate diva with the big hair.
Why We Love Her 'Cause we all secretly want to be as much of a drama queen as she is! We live for her!
No She Didn't! Pat Lil' Kim's exposed breast on stage at the MTV Video Music Awards in 1999. Mother Supreme is sexy at 58 but would never wear anything like that!
Yes She Did! Enter a drug and alcohol rehab facility over the summer and got out in time to perform to sell-out crowds in Europe and the U.S. Grand diva!

Born Diane Ross in Detroit, the home of Motown Records, she was a founding member of The Supremes. After a long streak with no hits, the ladies hit No. 1 with "Where Did Our Love Go," and 11 more No.1s followed. In 1970, Diana went solo and almost simultaneously began her acting career. Her first two films were partially directed by Motown mogul Berry Gordy himself. Her film debut, Lady Sings The Blues, for which she got an Academy Award nomination, was followed by Mahogany and The Wiz. Two TV films, Out of Darkness and Double Platinum, would continue to show Diana's acting skills through the 1990s. Though Diana has never won a Grammy, her mantelpiece is overrun with all the other awards she's received. She has just published a coffee-table book of photos from her life and career entitled Diana Ross: Going Back.



Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Luther Vandross

Claim to Fame That sexy, sultry voice!
Why We Love Him Because he makes the best love-making music, no matter how much he weighs.
No He Didn't! Refuse to answer any media questions about his sexuality. He feels he does not owe his fans any details about his personal life, and frankly, it's none of anybody's business. Enough said.
Yes He Did! Release Luther Vandross last year. His J Records debut is a soulful album that epitomizes classic Luther, and he's been touring ever since.

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

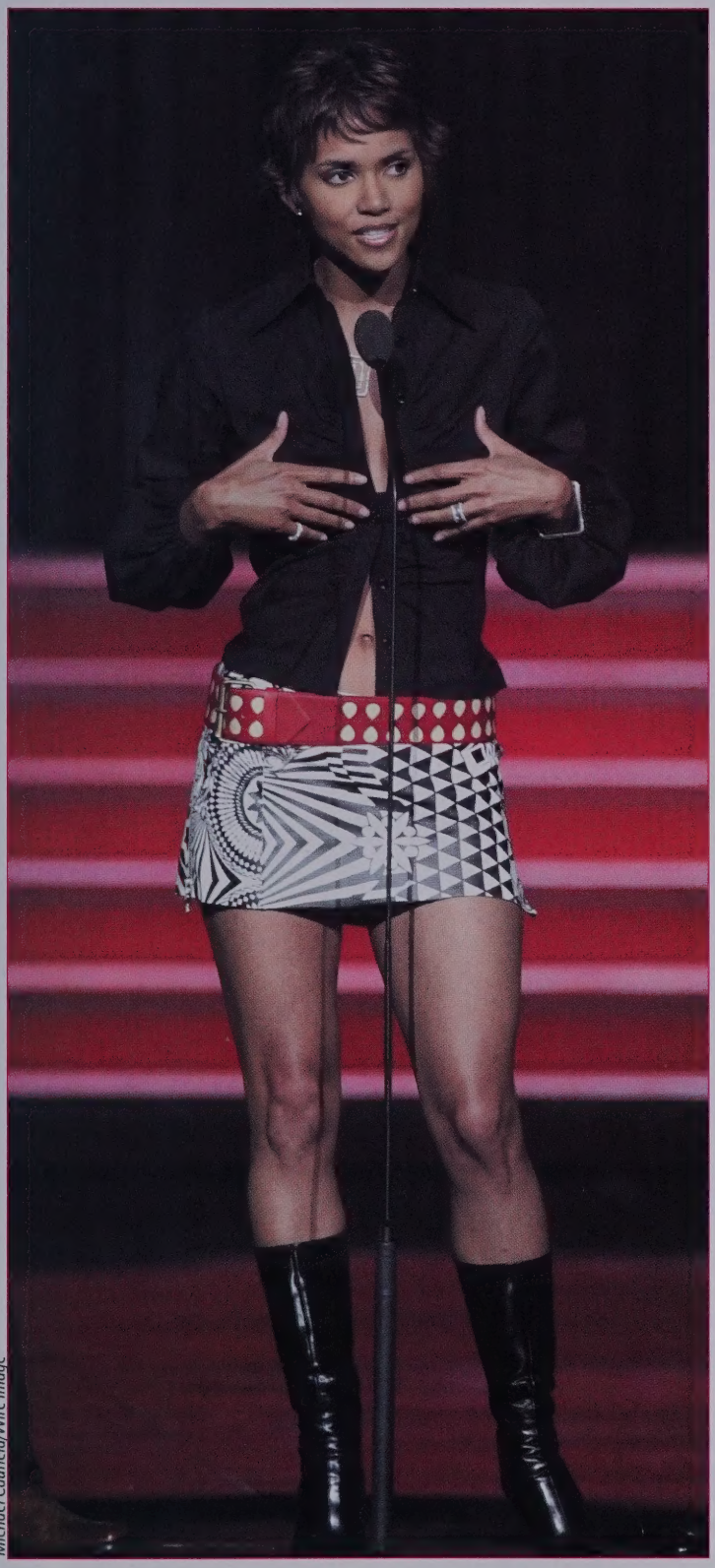
Born in the Bronx, N.Y., Vandross began his musical career by writing and performing jingles for television commercials. He got his big break when he met up with David Bowie and performed backup vocals as well as co-wrote a No. 1 hit on Bowie's 1975 album. Vandross then sang backup for such legends as Barbra Streisand, Carly Simon, and Donna Summer. He soon formed a group called Luther and released two albums, which received little attention. He even produced albums for Aretha Franklin. But his 1981 debut solo album, *Never Too Much*, officially put him on the map. He has had over 15 albums since then, many of them platinum. Vandross has won four Grammy awards and a host of other awards.

Mary J. Blige

Claim to Fame Queen of Hip Hop Soul
Why We Love Her She sings from the heart. When she sings, "No more drama," you feel her, and you know she feels you!
No She Didn't! Tell us that she is engaged but refused to give us any details. Come on, Mary, what's the 411 on your man? Inquiring minds want to know! When's the wedding? Is he fine?
Yes She Did! Head back to the studio with P. Diddy to record her next album just a few weeks after ending her "No More Drama" tour in August. This will be the 10-year anniversary of their first collaboration, *What's the 411?*

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Mary J. was born in the Bronx, N.Y. in 1971 and began singing in her church choir at an early age. She made a demo when she was 17, and the rest is history. Sean "P. Diddy" Combs signed her to Uptown Records and perfected her sound on her debut 1992 album, *What's the 411*?, which sold over 2 million copies. A few years later, she released *My Life*, which earned her a Grammy nomination. She has released a total of five albums and received numerous accolades and awards. In 2000, the evolving Blige starred in the dramatic film *Prison Song*. In August, Mary released *Dance For Me*, her second remix album that has been blowing up in the clubs. Since then, she has begun work on her next album. And you can hear her on Hip-Hop artist Common's latest single "Come Close," and in R&B crooner Jaheim's music video for "Fabulous."



Michael Caufield/Wire Image

Halle Berry

Claim to Fame Award-winning actress and model
Why We Love Her Because her beauty is absolutely flawless, but she's not afraid to portray some of the tackiest, ugliest characters on film. Then, she can flip it and serve glamour for Revlon! Work!
No She Didn't! Marry the finest, sexiest man in neo-soul music, Eric Benet. Oooh, yes! That Eric is the answer!
Yes He Did! Become the first African American to win an Academy Award for Best Actress. And she just became the latest Bond girl, starring as Jinx in the upcoming *Die Another Day*. Trailblazing diva-actress for the new millennium!

Born in Cleveland, and named after Halle Brothers department store there, Berry first found herself competing in several beauty pageants. She won the Miss Teen All-American Beauty Pageant in 1985, and the next year became the first runner-up in the Miss USA Pageant. Halle began modeling, and in 1991 she got her big acting break playing a crackhead in Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*.

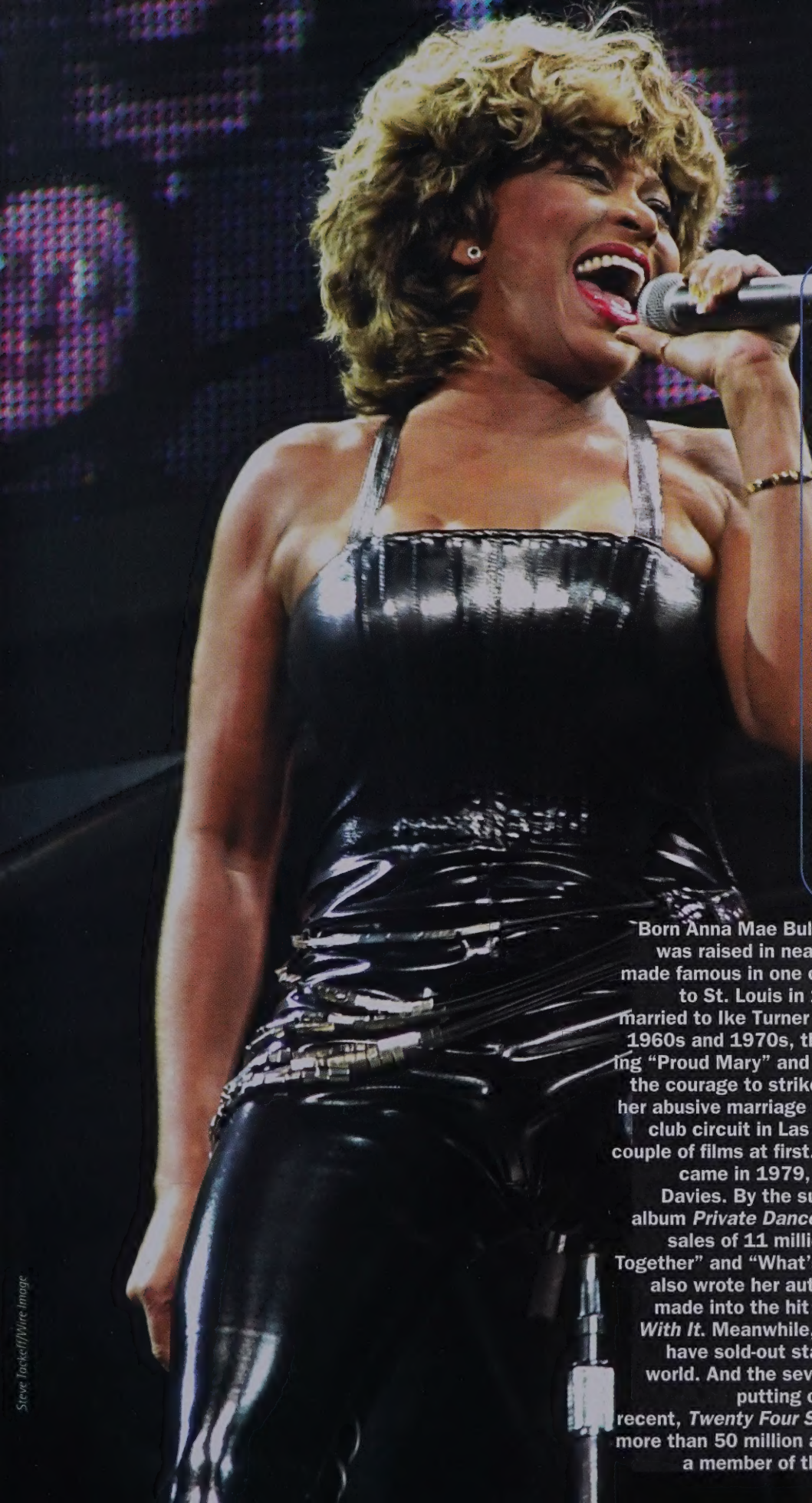
From there, she was cast in numerous movies, including *Boomerang*, *The Flintstones*, *Losing Isaiah*, *B.A.P.S.*, *Bulworth* and *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*. But she still did not get the respect she deserved in Hollywood. That all changed when she portrayed her own personal idol, Dorothy Dandridge, in the HBO movie, *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*. Films like *X-Men* and *Swordfish* would follow as she continued fulfilling her spokesmodel duties for Revlon. Berry received a Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award, both for Best Actress for her outstanding performance in Monster's Ball. Berry is currently filming *X-Men 2* in Vancouver for a next summer release, and she will produce a remake of *Foxy Brown*.

Angela Bassett

Michael Caulfield/Wire Image

Claim to Fame Award-winning actress
Why We Love Her Because she pours her soul into her performances like no other actress in Hollywood can. And check out her new look! Go, girl!
No She Didn't! Get the whole world riled up with her explanation for turning down the Oscar-winning role Halle Berry plays in Monster's Ball. While Bassett praised Berry's performance, she said the role simply was not for her. Miss Angela, do you! We ain't mad atcha!
Yes She Did! Win this year's Lena Horne Award for Outstanding Career Achievements in the Field of Entertainment at the recent Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards.

Bassett first got bit by the acting bug when she went to Washington, D.C., on a school field trip and attended a production of *Of Mice and Men*. She ended up studying Afro-American Studies at Yale University, then went on to earn a Master's Degree from its prestigious Drama School. Her big break came when John Singleton cast her as Cuba Gooding, Jr.'s mother in *Boyz N the Hood*. From there, she played opposite Denzel Washington in *Malcolm X*, then opposite Laurence Fishburne in *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Her portrayal of Tina Turner garnered her a Golden Globe Award and an Oscar nomination. Other movies to her credit include *Waiting to Exhale*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *The Score* and this year's *Sunshine State* and *The Rosa Parks Story*, which garnered her an Emmy nomination. She has received countless awards, including several NAACP Image Awards. Angela stars opposite Jeff Bridges, Penelope Cruz, Ed Harris, and Jessica Lange in *Masked* and *Anonymous*, due out next year.



Steve Tackell/Wire Image

Tina Turner

Claim to Fame The hardest working legs in show business and that piercing, powerful voice

Why We Love Her Because she endured abuse, courageously escaped and built a new career for herself, never looking back. If Tina can do that, we can do anything!

No She Didn't! Announce that her sold out Twenty Four Seven Tour in 2000 would be her last. Tina, come on, please roll down the river just one mo' time!

Yes He Did! Show up at the Giorgio Armani Spring 2003 Fashion Show in Milan last month sporting a new hairdo and still-flawless skin. Any woman who can serve like Tina at the age of 62 deserves a standing ovation! Show her some respect!

Born Anna Mae Bullock in Brownsville, Tenn., she was raised in nearby Nutbush, a small town she made famous in one of her songs. Anna Mae moved to St. Louis in 1956, and two years later was married to Ike Turner and singing in his band. In the 1960s and 1970s, they had a string of hits, including "Proud Mary" and "A Fool In Love." Turner found the courage to strike out on her own in 1976 once her abusive marriage ended. She worked the supper club circuit in Las Vegas and got small roles in a couple of films at first. Then Turner's second chance came in 1979, when she met manager Roger Davies. By the summer of 1984, her comeback album *Private Dancer* was on its way to worldwide sales of 11 million, led by the hits, "Let's Stay Together" and "What's Love Got To Do With It." She also wrote her autobiography, *I, Tina*, which was made into the hit biopic, *What's Love Got To Do With It*. Meanwhile, Tina's explosive stage shows have sold-out stadiums and arenas all over the world. And the seven-time Grammy winner is still putting out albums, including her most recent, *Twenty Four Seven*. To date, Turner has sold more than 50 million albums worldwide. She is also a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Janet Jackson

Claim to Fame Her classic R&B and pop hits and spectacular, electrifying stage shows.

Why We Love Her Miss Jackson has the best six-pack around. And by the gear she sports, she knows it. And the dance moves! She's not just Michael's little sister anymore.

No She Didn't! Reportedly date Matthew McConaughey, Jermaine Dupri, and *NSYNC's Justin Timberlake all in a six-month period. We have heard Janet speak of her "size" requirements in her men; does this mean that they ALL comply? Mmm...

Yes She Did! Recently team up with reggae hip-hopper Beenie Man for "Feel It Boy," the first single from his latest album, *Tropical Storm*. The single is already a hit and shooting up the charts. Do your thing, girl!

Michael Caufield/Wire Image

This 36-year-old sultry, singing diva was born in Gary, In., with the last name Jackson, so her career was almost chosen for her. As a teenager, she released two albums that were moderate successes. Then came *Control*, which skyrocketed her to super-stardom. Three years later, she won her first Grammy with the release of *Rhythm Nation 1814*. Her next two albums, *Janet.* and *The Velvet Rope*, both went multiplatinum, and her latest album *All For You* debuted at No.1 on Billboard's Hot 100 Chart. Her acting career began at age 7 when she strutted out on the Merv Griffin Show. Janet went on to star in TV shows *Good Times*, *Diff'rent Strokes*, and *Fame*, and in movies *Poetic Justice* and *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps*. She also recently made her second concert appearance on HBO with *Janet—Live in Hawaii*, which was the No. 1 DVD for several weeks after its September release. Janet also collaborated with Justin Timberlake on a song on his upcoming solo album entitled *(And She Said) Take Me Now*. She also recently wrote and recorded a song for Miramax's upcoming film Chicago.

Michael Caulfield/Wire Image

Patti Labelle

icons

Claim to Fame Her powerful voice that shows no mercy, and her wild, flamboyant hairstyles.

Why We Love Her Because she publicly shows her love for gays and lesbians. And all the children go up when she kicks off her shoes and rolls across the floor on stage. We feel ya, girl!

No She Didn't! Disappoint some fans by showing up late to an Los Angeles show and then using precious performance time to explain why. She had gone to visit a dear friend in the hospital and felt compelled to share the situation throughout the show. We understand, Patti! Just sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and we will be just fine!

Yes She Did! Perform "Lady Marmalade" with Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya, and Pink, and still maintained her title as the Queen of Onstage Hollering. Christina can "sang," but trust, Patti can blow them all away!

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1944, Patti grew up running track, singing in the glee club and acting in high school plays, but she enjoyed singing the most. In the 1960s, she led the superstar girl group Patti LaBelle and the Bluebells. In the 1970s, there was LaBelle, and in the 1980s, there was just Patti LaBelle. With both groups, she had moderate success, including the 1975 #1 hit, "Lady Marmalade," but Patti became a household name as a solo artist, with hits like "New Attitude" and "On My Own." Patti got back into the acting, having her own TV sitcom Out All Night and a recurring role on A Different World. Patti even released a cookbook and a motivational book in the past two years. Her most recent album, When a Woman Loves, was released in 2000. Last year, Patti was awarded the Lena Horne Award for Outstanding Career Achievement at the Soul Train Lady of Soul Awards. This year found Patti showing of her Philadelphia home on MTV's Cribs, and playing the mother of Destiny's Child member Kelly Rowland in the music video for Rowland's duet with Nelly, "Dilemma."

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Kirk Franklin

Claim to Fame His inspiring blend of hip-hop and contemporary and traditional gospel.

Why We Love Him Because he can make us get our groove on and praise the Lord at the same time. Can we get a witness?

No He Didn't! Change the name of his group at least twice? First, it was The Family. Then, it became God's Property. Next, there was Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation. What's up, Kirk? Does God keep telling you to change it?

Yes He Did! Release his latest album, *The Rebirth of Kirk Franklin*, which topped the Billboard Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Album chart earlier this year and was certified Gold.

Franklin was born in Fort Worth, Texas, and raised by an older aunt. He was playing the piano by age 4 and was offered a recording contract by age 7. His aunt turned the contract down, but Franklin kept playing music. At age 11, he was appointed the Minister of Music at his church. It was then that he began to write and arrange music. By 1993, Franklin was being offered recording contracts again, and he finally chose a label, GospoCentric. Later that year, he released his first album, Kirk Franklin and the Family, and it put Kirk on the map. *Whatcha Lookin' 4* was released a few years later, earning Kirk his first Grammy. In July of 1997, *Stomp* was released, becoming a hit on both the gospel, pop, and R&B charts. Currently, Kirk is promoting his latest album on the Hopeville Tour with Yolanda Adams and Donnie McClurkin.

Steve Granitz/Wire Image

Pastor Shirley Caesar

Claim to Fame Queen of Gospel

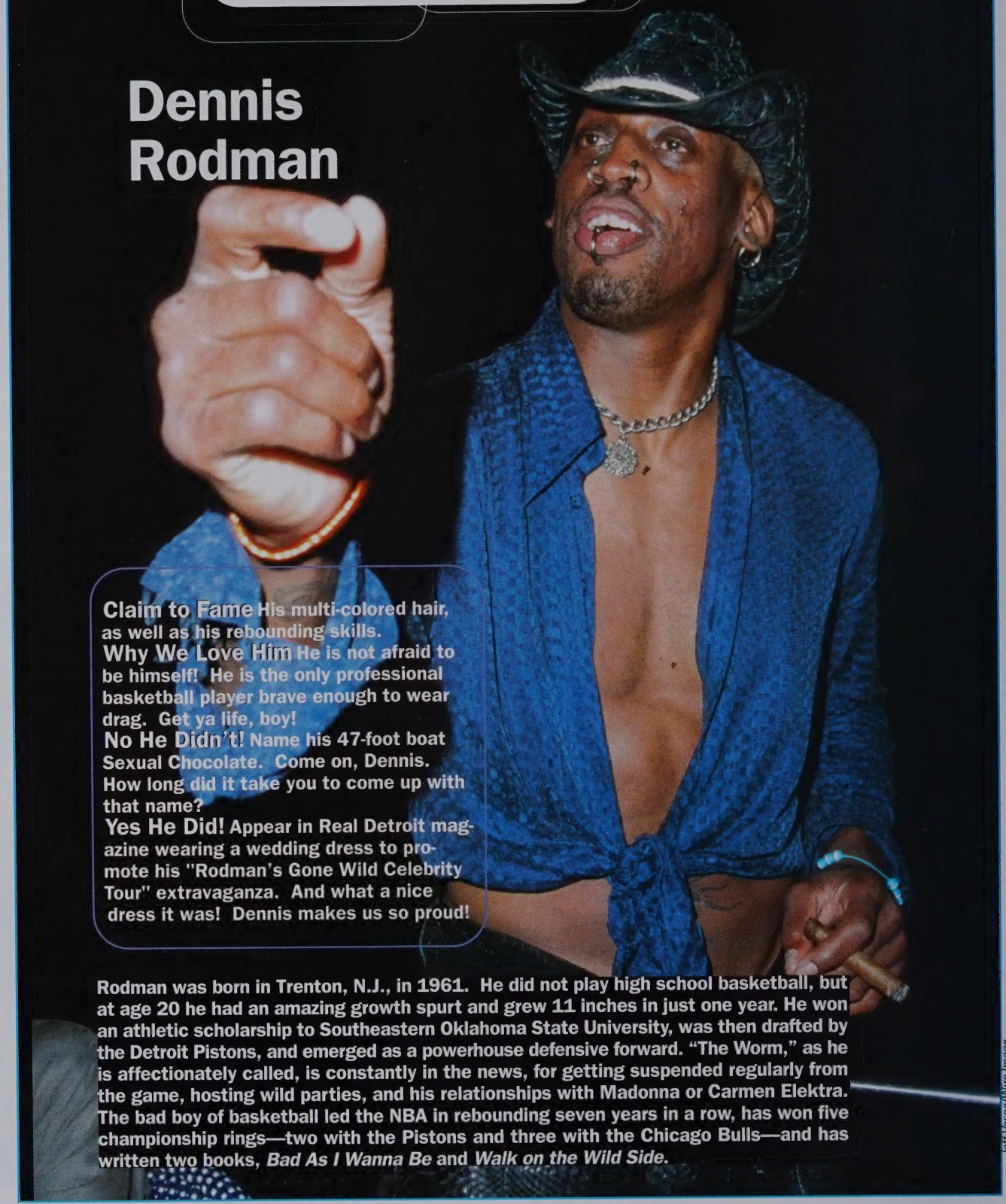
Why We Love Her Because she practices what she preaches. And some of her music makes for fierce house remixes! Honey, "hold my mule" while I testify on the dance floor!

No She Didn't! Graduate magna cum laude with a B.A. in Business Marketing, despite high school teachers telling her she was not college material. And she has received numerous honorary doctorates from other universities, as well. Don't mess with a highly favored Christian with credentials!

Yes She Did! Last year, she released her 35th album, *You Can Make It*, a lively mixture of Gospel, Soul, and a little R&B.

Pastor Shirley Caesar has been in the ministry for over 40 years, and singing even longer. Born in Durham, N.C., her father died when she was 8, and she found herself taking care of her semi-invalid mother and her siblings. After graduating from college, she began her professional singing career. Within a decade Caesar became the second African-American woman to win a Grammy for a gospel performance, following in the footsteps of the legendary Mahalia Jackson. Pastor Caesar has had a stunning musical career with 10 Grammy Awards, 12 Stellar Awards, and 17 Dove Awards to her credits.

Dennis Rodman



Claim to Fame His multi-colored hair, as well as his rebounding skills.

Why We Love Him He is not afraid to be himself! He is the only professional basketball player brave enough to wear drag. Get ya life, boy!

No He Didn't! Name his 47-foot boat Sexual Chocolate. Come on, Dennis. How long did it take you to come up with that name?

Yes He Did! Appear in Real Detroit magazine wearing a wedding dress to promote his "Rodman's Gone Wild Celebrity Tour" extravaganza. And what a nice dress it was! Dennis makes us so proud!

Rodman was born in Trenton, N.J., in 1961. He did not play high school basketball, but at age 20 he had an amazing growth spurt and grew 11 inches in just one year. He won an athletic scholarship to Southeastern Oklahoma State University, was then drafted by the Detroit Pistons, and emerged as a powerhouse defensive forward. "The Worm," as he is affectionately called, is constantly in the news, for getting suspended regularly from the game, hosting wild parties, and his relationships with Madonna or Carmen Elektra. The bad boy of basketball led the NBA in rebounding seven years in a row, has won five championship rings—two with the Pistons and three with the Chicago Bulls—and has written two books, *Bad As I Wanna Be* and *Walk on the Wild Side*.

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Claim to Fame Her androgynous persona and her sharp-cut hairstyles

Why We Love Her She is 50 years-old, and her body still looks tight. She's the ultimate dominatrix-sex kitten.

No She Didn't! Date a host of renaissance men in her life, including Dolph Lundgren. In 1996, she married a man 21 years her junior, her bodyguard, Atila Altaunbay. Alright, Miss Thang!

Yes She Did! Receive the honor as one of the VH-1's 100 Greatest Women of Rock and Roll. She is currently working on her latest album, and recently recorded tracks with rap-diva Lil' Kim.

Grace Jones

Born in Spanishtown, Jamaica, the 6-foot diva studied theater at Syracuse University, then gained notoriety as a top fashion model and actress in Italian movies. In 1977, she was offered a recording contract, which produced her first hit, "I Need a Man." She made a few more successful albums, most notably 1981's *Nightclubbing*, which produced the hit "Pull Up to the Bumper." Grace's infamous "'*A One Man Show* was filmed for the big screen in 1981. She co-starred in a few small movies but got her big film break in 1984 opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Conan the Destroyer*. Her return to recording brought the 1985 hit, "Slave to the Rhythm," then with *Nipple To The Bottle* and The Apple Stretching. She continued putting out the albums and the movies, including 1985's *A View to A Kill* and 1992's *Boomerang*. Recently, she ventured back onto the stage, performing in *Celebration of the Lizard* with Billy Zane.

Jeff Vespa/Wire Image

Jennifer Holliday

YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME !

words by Michael K. Watts

Jennifer Holliday touches my soul." That's one diehard gay fan's explanation of why the Broadway diva is an icon in the eyes and hearts of thousands of gays and lesbians. Back when she won the 1982 Tony Award for her portrayal of Effie "Melody" White in "Dreamgirls," Holliday, 42, says her undesirable size and the painful subjects in her songs drew gay and lesbian audiences to her. Twenty years later, gays and lesbians are an audience she owes a great deal.

"[Gays and lesbians] supported me throughout a time when no one else would. Not church people, not anybody," Holliday revealed about the lean times in her career. "Being able to sing at three or four o'clock in the morning at gay clubs paid not only my house note but supported my family."

"Being able to sing at four in the morning at gay clubs paid not only my house note but supported my family."

Holliday's fans support her seemingly unconditionally—through the triumphs and the drama! She's definitely had her share of drama, especially with her "Dreamgirls" co-star Sheryl Lee Ralph. By the time "Dreamgirls" opened on Broadway, Holliday says the musical had become much less of the star vehicle that Ralph had wanted for herself, causing a bitter relationship between these leading ladies for years to come. "Sheryl Lee and I put our battle swords down about eight years ago," said Holliday setting the record straight. She says the hateful animosity between the Broadway divas is no more, and they are in touch from time to time.

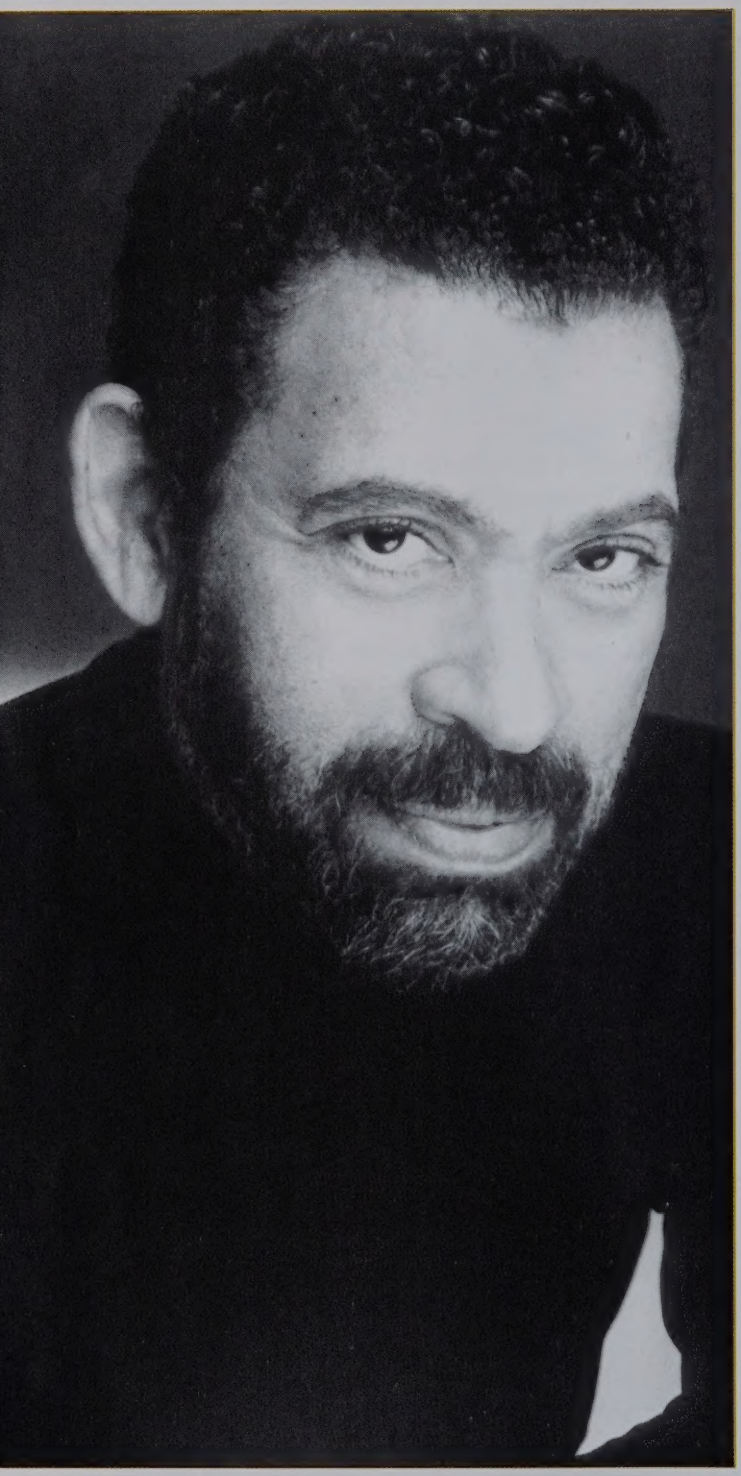
Today, the two-time Grammy Award-winning powerhouse performs regularly at gay pride celebrations and charity benefits across the country. But to hear Holliday's high-power dance hits like "No Frills Love," "Just Let Me Wait," and 1999's "Think It Over," fans will have to request them these days. "I'm just not as comfortable singing uptempo [songs] as I am singing ballads," admitted the chanteuse, referring to her bone-chilling slow-jams like "I Am Love" and "Say You Love Me."

When Holliday is not performing, she is maintaining her vegetarian diet, sailing or enjoying a game of Scrabble with friends in her New York City home. And, she's got a new man in her life! "I'm very much in love," Holliday revealed ecstatically of her beau of a year and a half.

Holliday began singing in the church choir at age 9 in her native Houston, Texas. At the ripe age of 18, she got an audition with the Broadway smash "Your Arms Too Short to Box with God," and she was hired for the lead role the same day. "Dreamgirls" would follow, producing her number one, Grammy Award-winning torch-ballad "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going." Several albums, hits and misses later, Holliday celebrated a dramatic weight loss with 1991's R&B hit "I'm On Your Side." But years of unhappiness came to a head in the mid-1990s as she battled and successfully overcame a severe bout of depression. In 1996, a recurring role on FOX's "Ally McBeal" reestablished her with mainstream audiences.

"Dreamgirls" was revived on tour in 1994 and again in July of this year during the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. In October, she celebrated her birthday by performing a benefit concert in New York City entitled "Romance in the Dark" in tribute to the great African American Broadway musicals. The event raised money for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. "I'm trying to bring some attention back to African American theatre which right now seems like it has somehow disappeared," Holliday said, "we should be on Broadway every year without question." On the big screen, she's belting out the blues and a little gospel in the recent film "The Rising Place" which stars Elise Neal.

Whether stage or screen, Holliday's gay and lesbian fans will always be right there, singing along and giving her glory.



Maurice Hines

ONE OF THE LAST LINKS TO THE OLD GLITTER IS STILL CARRYING ON

words by Stanley Bennett Clay

I called Lena Horne recently when my CD came out—and you know if she likes you because she curses—so I had sent my CD to her, and I hadn't heard from her. So I called from Chicago just to wish her Merry Christmas. Carl Craig answers the phone, and she hears my voice over the speaker. She calls out to Craig, 'By the way. . . .I heard the CD.' So I'm getting nervous because Lena will tell you the truth. Then she says: 'Tell that little mothafucka he can sing!'"

With parts of six decades performing and hanging with some of the greats under his belt, Maurice Hines has plenty of these stories to tell about a golden age of showbiz that is all but gone save for the link he represents.

Maurice started his professional dancing career in 1954 at the age of 7. Partnered with his 5-year-old brother Gregory, the Hines kids, as they were known back then, were spotted by Dinah Washington and immediately hired to open for Ruth Brown at The Apollo Theater. Before they reached high school, they had traveled the world and had shared the stage with such legends as Count Basie, Judy Garland, and Ella Fitzgerald, to name a few. Such stars as Don Rickles and the late comedienne Totie Fields shunned them, fearful of the thunderous applause and standing ovations the pubescent opening act received everywhere they performed.

Over the years Gregory gravitated toward Hollywood while Maurice held on to his classic jazz, tap, nightclub ,and Broadway roots. If some believe Maurice is not on celebrity par with his brother, he is not bothered. On the contrary, he is quite proud of his younger brother and quite proud of his own stellar accomplishments. This year alone the veteran entertainer has been very busy: he starred in the national touring company of Guys & Dolls; his CD, Maurice: I've Never Been In Love Before, an impeccably nuanced collection of jazz, standards and show tunes was re-released by Arbors Records; and his life story was commissioned for publication.

"I just want it to be said that I was a good person who did the right thing, especially for my people. There have been opportunities to further my career by doing the wrong thing with regard to my people. But I was never about that."

Also this year, Maurice stepped behind the camera to direct his first film, a whodunit featuring gay detectives. "It ain't no low budget, it's no budget," he laughs. "All my friends are doing it for nothing. When we sell it, then everybody'll get paid. We're all looking out for each other."

Though Maurice is venturing into film, this diehard New York native has no Hollywood desires and little faith in the Hollywood system. "I'm just doing this one movie," he says. "I don't think of myself as having a film career at all because I don't really like doing them. This happens to be a story I have to tell, and this has been in my life and in my world for the last nine years. I waited for Hollywood to do it and they weren't courageous enough, so I'm doing it myself.

"I don't see that much of a change in Hollywood. I think that some people will get the opportunity if they know how to play their role politically and keep their mouths shut about what's going on, because the bigger you get and the more things you accumulate, the more difficult it is for you to speak out." For Maurice Hines, however, not speaking out is not an option.

"I'm doing shows outside of America. I'm doing one in The Dominican Republic, I'm doing one in Cuba, and I'm doing one in Amsterdam. I wanted a worldwide career because I knew, since I was so political, that they would try to stop me in this country. I think we have a tendency to forget what devastates us as a people when something good happens for us like Halle Berry winning. We forget that Eartha Kitt was banned here in this country for 10 years [for reducing then first lady Ladybird Johnson to tears in The White House when Kitt expressed her strong opposition to the Vietnam War.] And if she didn't have an international career, she would be homeless. We forget what happens to us. I don't forget because they are the people that inspire methe Eartha Kitts, the Lena Hornes."

If anything has put a damper on Maurice's indomitable spirit, it would be the loss of his mother two years ago. It was Alma Hines, a shy and gentle woman who was not supposed to have children, who became, in her own words, "a cage of apes" when it came to her miracle sons. It was she who lovingly guided Maurice's and Gregory's careers from childhood to middle age.

"When I was getting ready to do my CD, I was practicing at my mother's house," Maurice recalls with a bittersweetness, "and she said, 'what's that thing you're doing with your voice?' And I said,'You mean 'riffing,' mother?' And she said 'yeah.' Then she said, 'you don't have any. Do the songs you know. You don't have no riffs. You know who your favorite singer is, Nat King Cole. You don't have to be him, but do his songs. Do his songs for your mother.' That's why there's so much love in it because I did it for my mother. Then the record company heard it and asked who was it, and when my manager told them it was me, they were shocked. They said, 'You mean Maurice Hines, the dancer, can sing like that?' So they immediately signed me. It was all a happy accident, engineered by my mother from the heavens.

"Losing [my mother] was very devastating to me and my brother. I just got an award from the Dance Educators of America for Lifetime

Continued on page 76

Dee Dee Bridgewater

A JAZZ ICON STEPS INTO A 'NEW' SPACE

words by G. B. Mann

Dee Dee Bridgewater. Picture the little girl trotted out by her mother to sing for guests. "Sing, baby." That's her. According to Bridgewater, she did so with gusto, never shying away. "From that young age, I always knew that I wanted to be a singing star," Bridgewater beamed. And how bright she shines.

After living in Paris for several years, she now calls Las Vegas home. That's where Venus caught up with her. Amid the intermittent clatter of workmen doing various renovations and repairs, we managed to get downright cozy. "Call me Dee Dee, please," she humbly requested.

continued on page 77

Dionne Warwick

40 YEARS, 60 ALBUMS & MORE TO COME

words by Michael K. Watts

Celebrating 40 years in the music business this year, legendary entertainer Dionne Warwick has given the world timeless songs and a lifetime of musical memories. It's amazing to ponder that Warwick has been saying a "little prayer," asking the "way to San Jose," and walking "on by" for 40 of her 61 years. But her numbers don't stop there.

Over 50 hit singles—two No. 1 hits and 12 Top 10 hits. 60 albums—one certified platinum and five certified gold. Five Grammy Awards and millions of loyal fans across the globe. How does she deliver so consistently? "Staying true to the people who have supported this career for this long," Warwick humbly explained, "and giving them hopefully what they are expecting of me. That's the secret."

A mother of two sons and a grandmother of five, Warwick's roots are firmly planted in her singing family, with sister Dee Dee Warwick and cousins Whitney Houston, Cissy Houston, and Leontyne Price. While studying at the Hartt College of Music, she regularly moonlighted as a session singer. Her weekends and holidays were often spent in New York, where she met award-winning songwriting duo Burt Bacharach and Hal David. Their graduation gift to her was her first hit, "Don't Make Me Over" in 1962. Together, they collaborated on a string of hits over the next ten years, including "Walk On By," "Message to Michael," "Alfie," and "The Windows of the World." "The music that Bacharach, David, and Warwick made will outlive all of us because they represent not only the fabric of our lives but so many lives," Warwick pointed out. And the hits, gold records, and awards just kept coming.

Dubbed "the voice that bridged the gap," Warwick is considered a pioneer as one of the first artists to cross over and appeal to mainstream audiences. Songs like "I Say a Little Prayer" and the Grammy Award-winning "Do You Know the Way to San Jose" remain indelibly stamped in the hearts of her fans today. Some of Warwick's more famous fans have remade her songs and made them their own, as in Luther Vandross' "A House is Not a Home."

Speaking of homes, the Dionne Warwick Design Group has designed commercial and residential spaces for the world's elite, including Warwick's own home in Brazil. "It's my stress-free country. It's just where I need to be right now," Warwick serenely offered. She splits her time between Brazil and her native New Jersey where her mother still lives.

Warwick has been highly recognized as a constant force in the entertainment industry: hosting the hit TV show *Solid Gold* in the 1980s; participating in the unprecedented "We Are the World" and "That's What Friends Are For" benefit recordings; and completing a successful stint as host of the Psychic Friends Network. Often unnoticed are Warwick's dedicated humanitarian efforts for many causes, including the fight against AIDS. "I've been given so much [that] I find it very easy to give back," the gracious Warwick said.

In the future Warwick will be required to give even more of her time to charitable organizations to satisfy an agreement that kept her out of jail. On May 12 of this year, Warwick was arrested at the Miami International Airport and charged for possession of less than 5 grams of marijuana. "Entertainers are sometimes placed in vulnerable situations which are completely beyond their control. To this day, I am still puzzled as to what happened to me in the Miami Airport," Warwick said in a statement to the press. Charges were later dropped in exchange for a charitable donation and participation in anti-drug announcements. Warwick also agreed to complete a drug treatment program.

Meanwhile, big plans are under way for Warwick to commemorate her 40 years in a 40-song duets album entitled *My Friends and Me* due this fall. She's brought in the best in the business—Luther Vandross, Roberta Flack, James Ingram—to recreate the magic of songs that have touched so many for 40 years.

Power of the Pitch

Film Writer Maisha Yearwood has Hollywood in the Palm of Her Hand

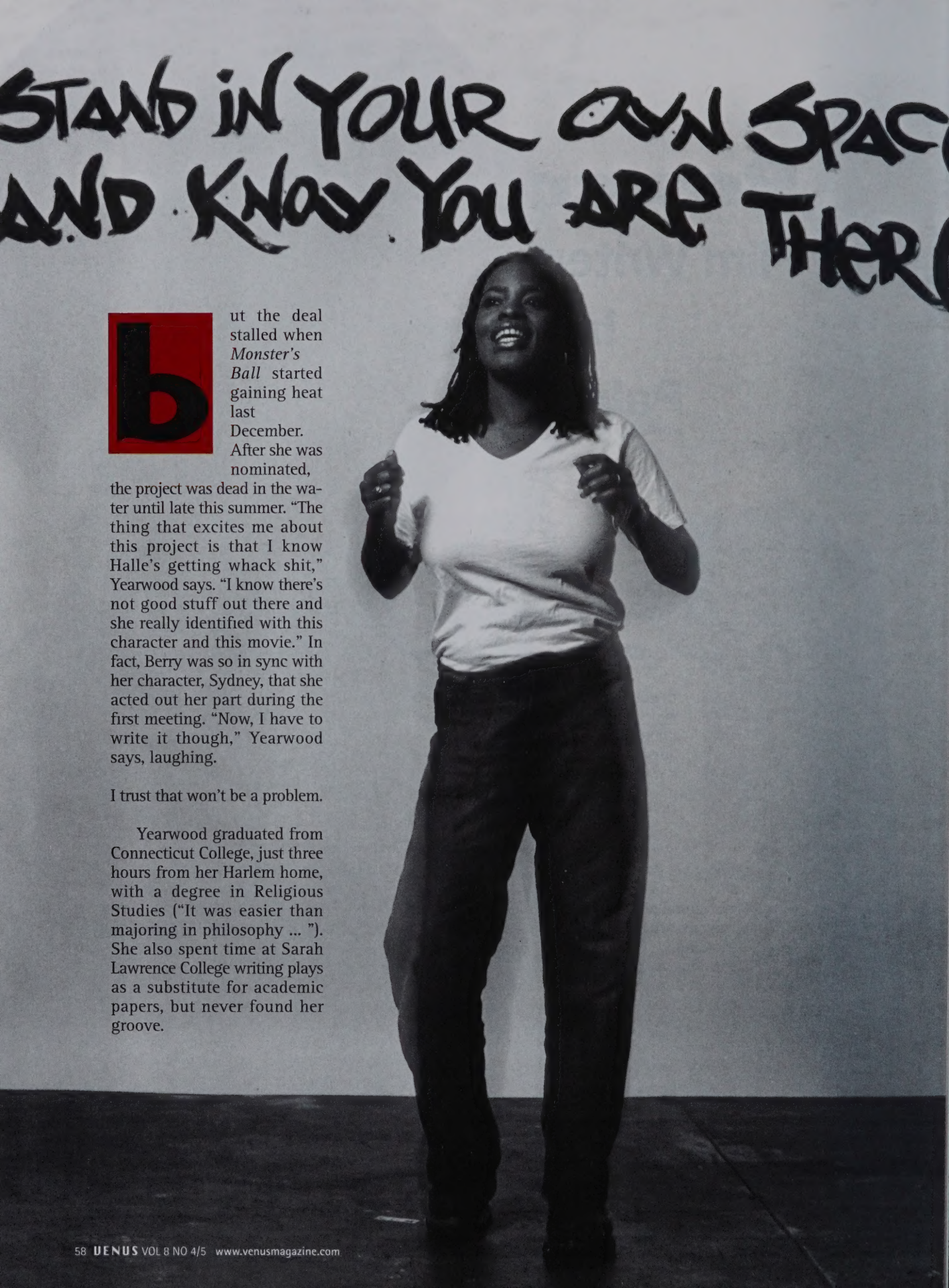
words by Anderson Jones

I'm not sure, but I have a feeling I don't have Maisha Yearwood's complete attention.

It's not that she isn't maintaining eye contact, laughing at my lame jokes or answering my questions thoroughly and with a frankness uncommon among most Hollywood industry types, she's just ... distracted. Every once and a while I catch her eyes darting past me, but I'm afraid to follow her gaze. I pretend not to notice. Instead, I learn quickly that the 29-year-old woman with natural dreds tickling the tops of her shoulders covered with a bright red California T-shirt, is uncommon.

Less than four years after leaving AFI's Film School, Yearwood shares a tiny table with me at the Silverlake java joint, The Coffee Table. She's already sold three sitcom ideas, a movie of the week, and three feature films—all on the strength of her legendary pitches. "I try to make them see the movie," she says of her 30-minute performance pieces. "It's almost like telling one long joke." Her first feature film to sell, a raucous, modestly budgeted comedy called *Where's the Party At?*, which follows an out-of-control bachelorette party, found a home at Artisan and Ice Cube's production house, Cubevision. News of her deal with Artisan broke in *Variety*, the daily industry bible, on her last day as a temp at Disney, where she passed the time checking DVDs for flaws. "And the moment that article came out," Yearwood recalls, "no one ever treated me the same again. You could see they weren't looking at me the same way." By the end of the day, her colleagues were feting her new fame with champagne and cake. "It was wild," Yearwood laughs. "I was like damn, no one wanted to talk to me before."

Another sold pitch waiting in the wings is called *Beauty School Dropout*, a female version of *Barbershop* with a *Hairspray* twist. A young, white Detroit woman wants to become the best Black hairstylist in the city and enters the mother of all hair shows. Lord, help her. But the next Yearwood pitch-come-feature to go into production will probably be *The Two-Year Mark*, a romantic comedy that has Halle Berry attached. Fox will produce. Yearwood will begin writing the script any day now. Although Berry got on board early, her Academy Award-winning run almost sunk the picture before it got off the ground. Yearwood pitched the movie, which examines love and class issues between an uptown girl and her way, way uptown boyfriend—and I mean Harlem, not the Upper West Side—to Berry last fall.



But the deal stalled when *Monster's Ball* started gaining heat last December. After she was nominated, the project was dead in the water until late this summer. "The thing that excites me about this project is that I know Halle's getting whack shit," Yearwood says. "I know there's not good stuff out there and she really identified with this character and this movie." In fact, Berry was so in sync with her character, Sydney, that she acted out her part during the first meeting. "Now, I have to write it though," Yearwood says, laughing.

I trust that won't be a problem.

Yearwood graduated from Connecticut College, just three hours from her Harlem home, with a degree in Religious Studies ("It was easier than majoring in philosophy ... "). She also spent time at Sarah Lawrence College writing plays as a substitute for academic papers, but never found her groove.

"I was very bitter. I wished it was the '50s and I didn't have to go, because I didn't like school," she says. "It was one of the advantages of being Fonzie. I would work as a mechanic or something." Disillusioned with school but inspired by the movies, she relocated to the Left Coast to attend UCLA's Film School, then transferred to AFI to ride the coattails of her idol, filmmaker Julie Dash.

"The thing that cemented the deal for me was *Daughters of the Dust*," Yearwood remembers. Up to that point, she was pretty sure she'd become a soap opera writer ("How hard could it be? It's all dialogue, all drama."). "I saw it the summer before my senior year in college. Film had never occurred to me as an option. I had never seen people of color in a movie like that. It was like what Steven Spielberg is for a lot of these white guys in film school. I can put images of Black women on film."

Yearwood made her first successful pitch to her mother, who worked as a producer on *The Cosby Show*. Earlier, she came out to her family while attending Sarah Lawrence and experienced little drama. "The environment at that school supported being different," she says. "When you come out to your family, a part of you dies—how they see you and think about you in terms of your future. It has to die because that's not who you are anymore." The Yearwood household supported individuality. Yearwood calls herself the dyke chick; one brother, who could model, runs a Web design company and only wears Armani or Calvin; another brother is a jock now working in finance; her gorgeous sister lives in L.A., as well, and Yearwood calls her a real "around-the-way girl." Her siblings were the characters in a sitcom Yearwood sold her mother, who got

"I was the girl in high school who was obviously gay."

her a meeting with Warner Bros., but she pitched alone and sold it on her first try. "What white people call luck, Black people call being blessed," says Yearwood, with a sigh. "I am very blessed."

continued on page 76

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Pride in NYC

1. [l-r] Tita Gray, Executive Director of Black Pride NYC, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, and NYC Pride Founder James Saunders open the awards ceremony at the Brooklyn Marriot 2. Thelma Houston *feelin' it* on stage at the historic Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street. 3. Calvin Clark smacks some brotha-ly love on the cheek of James Saunders 4. Colonel Abrams turns it out at PrideFest 2002 in the Village 5. The lovely Lydia Lee Love is all smiles with Deepa Soul at PrideFest. Special THANKS to Black Pride NYC producer Lawrence Pickney, [not pictured.] You worked it boy!

Doug Meszler 1-3 Tina Paul 4,5

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– Dante

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Hotter Than July Pride in the Motor City

Jason Michael

Detroit

The Annual Billionaire Boy's Club Brunch during the Hotter Than July Weekend brought together hundreds of pride participants including [l to r] Bryan Philpot-Program Director for National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum [NBLGLF]; Roosevelt Mosby NBLGLF Board of Directors; June Washington Detroit Black Gay Pride Inc [DBGP]. Former Director; and Johnny Jenkins Jr. DBGP Inc., Co-Founder, President-Director.

Pride in Alabama

The Walker County Alabama Committee presented Elizabeth Birch, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign [HRC] with its annual Medgar Evers Civil Rights Award. This is the 4th year of this award. Previous winners have been Alabama State, Senator, Roger Smithersman and the former NAACP Walker CountyPresident, Willie Moore. The award recognizes a person who has made outstanding civil rights contribution in the fields of religion, education or politics. The Rev. David Lewis, r, who presented the award, is no stranger to human rights. He is an openly gay minister in the State of Alabama. He was the first African American to be named Alabama honorary state treasurer in 2001. He has spoken on gay rights issues at University of Alabama, Yale University, Columbia University, Penn State University, and the University of Florida to name a few. He is assistant pastor of the St. Johns Missionary Baptist Church in Dora Alabama. He preaches tolerance and understanding of gays and lesbians.

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-- Hector, Juan, Marlon, Eric

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Windy City Pride's 1st Prize Poetry Slam winner, T'ai Freedom Ford, c, went back to her native Brooklyn, NY $750 richer after rhyming past the competition last summer. Pride producer Thayer L. Johnson, left, and Slam producer CC Carter, right, presented the check.

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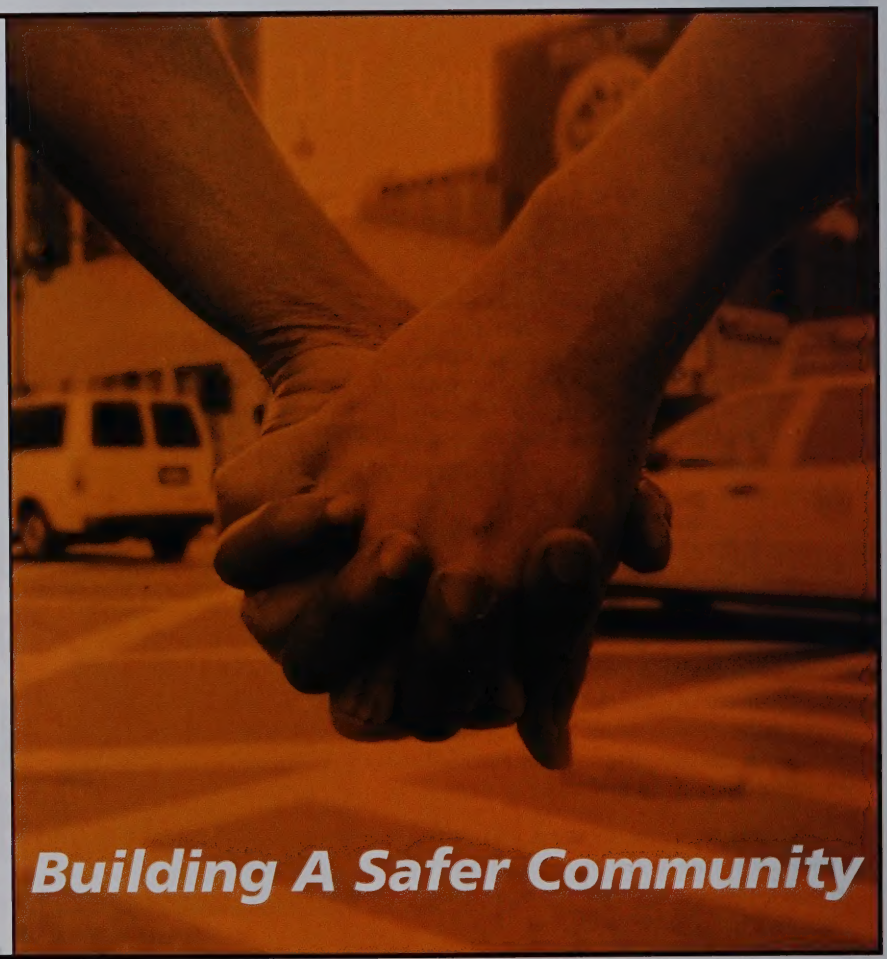

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Some Call Me a Survivor

by Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

Kwabena Rainey Cheeks has been doing battle with HIV for two decades. He's winning.

Some call me a survivor because I am a black 49—year—old gay man that got through the public school system living in Washington, DC. Oh yes, I have survived racism, classism and homophobia, and, on top of all of that, I have been HIV positive since 1984. Some say I have AIDS; that depends on which month you check.

Yes, I AM A SURVIVOR! As the song says, "Ain't got time to die."

– Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

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   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

2. **The kind or amount of moderate activities you can do, like moving a table, or carrying groceries.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

3. **Walking uphill or climbing a few flights of stairs.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

4. **Eating, dressing, bathing, or cooking a meal.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

5. **Your social activities, like visiting with friends and family.**

   - ☐ YES, limited a lot
   - ☐ YES, limited a little
   - ☐ NO, not limited at all

If you answered **"YES, LIMITED A LOT"** or **"YES, LIMITED A LITTLE"** to most questions, you may have anemia.

SHOW THIS TEST TO YOUR DOCTOR, AND ASK IF YOU SHOULD HAVE A BLOOD TEST.

If you do have anemia, he or she can decide what treatment, if any, is right for you.

See important safety and product information on the accompanying advertisement.

PROCRIT®
PROTEIN ALFA

Manufactured by Amgen Inc., Thousand Oaks, California 91320 -1789
Distributed by: **Ortho Biotech Products, L.P.**, Raritan, New Jersey 08869-0670

I'm getting it done AGAIN

If you don't have the energy to do the things you used to do, **ASK YOUR DOCTOR** about your red blood cell count.

You may have anemia.

Feeling good isn't just about viral loads and T-cell counts. HIV and HIV medications (including AZT) can deplete your body's red blood cells and cause anemia. And anemia can make you feel tired and weak. Anemia affects 1 out of 4 people who are HIV+ and 3 out of 4 people with AIDS.

PROCRIT® (Epoetin alfa) is identical to the hormone your body naturally produces to increase your red blood cell count. More red blood cells can mean more energy.

It's a treatment that's been used for over 10 years and for more than 1 million patients. If you think anemia is stopping you from getting things done, ask your doctor if PROCRIT is right for you.

PROCRIT is an effective treatment for anemia induced by AZT-containing regimens in HIV patients. PROCRIT has a proven safety record. In studies, side effects were similar in PROCRIT- and placebo-treated patients. PROCRIT is available only by prescription and is administered by your healthcare provider as an injection. For complete details, see the Brief Prescribing Information on the following page.

PROCRIT®
EPOETIN ALFA
Strength for Living®

For more information, please call **1-888-839-5891** or visit **www.PROCRIT.com**

Manufactured by Amgen Inc., Thousand Oaks, California 91320-1789
Distributed by: **Ortho Biotech Products, L.P.**, Raritan, New Jersey 08869-0670

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PRESCRIBING INFORMATION INDICATED FOR THE TREATMENT OF ANEMIA IN ZIDOVUDINE-TREATED HIV-INFECTED PATIENTS

PROCRIT®

EPOETIN ALFA

For Injection

FOR FULL PRESCRIBING INFORMATION FOR ALL INDICATIONS, REFER TO THE PHYSICIANS' DESK REFERENCE®

INDICATIONS AND USAGE

PROCRIT® (Epoetin alfa) is indicated for the treatment of anemia related to therapy with zidovudine in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-infected patients. PROCRIT is indicated to elevate or maintain the red blood cell level [as manifested by the hematocrit (HCT) or hemoglobin determinations] and to decrease the need for transfusions in these patients. PROCRIT is not indicated for the treatment of anemia in HIV-infected patients due to other factors such as iron or folate deficiencies, hemolysis or gastrointestinal bleeding, which should be managed appropriately.

PROCRIT, at a dose of 100 U/kg 3 times per week (TIW), is effective in decreasing the transfusion requirement and increasing the red blood cell level of anemic, HIV-infected patients treated with zidovudine, when the endogenous serum erythropoietin level is ≤500 mU/mL and when patients are receiving a dose of zidovudine ≤4200 mg/week.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

PROCRIT is contraindicated in patients with:

1) Uncontrolled hypertension.
2) Known hypersensitivity to mammalian cell-derived products.
3) Known hypersensitivity to Albumin (Human).

WARNINGS

Pediatric Use: The multidose preserved formulation contains benzyl alcohol. Benzyl alcohol has been reported to be associated with an increased incidence of neurological and other complications in premature infants, which are sometimes fatal. PROCRIT therapy has not been linked to exacerbation of hypertension, seizures, and thrombotic events in HIV-infected patients.

PRECAUTIONS

The parenteral administration of any biologic product should be attended by appropriate precautions in case allergic or other untoward reactions occur (see CONTRAINDICATIONS). In clinical trials, while transient rashes were occasionally observed concurrently with PROCRIT therapy, no serious allergic or anaphylactic reactions were reported. (See ADVERSE REACTIONS for more information regarding allergic reactions.)

The safety and efficacy of PROCRIT therapy have not been established in patients with a known history of a seizure disorder or underlying hematologic disease (eg, sickle cell anemia, myelodysplastic syndromes, or hypercoagulable disorders).

In some female patients, menses have resumed following PROCRIT therapy; the possibility of pregnancy should be discussed and the need for contraception evaluated.

Hematology: Exacerbation of porphyria has been observed rarely in patients with chronic renal failure (CRF) treated with PROCRIT. However, PROCRIT has not caused increased urinary excretion of porphyrin metabolites in normal volunteers, even in the presence of a rapid erythropoietic response. Nevertheless, PROCRIT should be used with caution in patients with known porphyria.

In preclinical studies in dogs and rats, but not in monkeys, PROCRIT therapy was associated with subclinical bone marrow fibrosis. Therefore, zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients should have HCT measured once a week (QW) until HCT has been stabilized, and measured periodically thereafter.

Delayed or Diminished Response: If the patient fails to respond or to maintain a response to doses within the recommended dosing range, the following etiologies should be considered and evaluated: 1) Iron deficiency: Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron therapy (see Iron Evaluation). 2) Underlying infectious, inflammatory, or malignant processes. 3) Occult blood loss. 4) Underlying hematologic diseases (ie, thalassemia, refractory anemia, or other myelodysplastic disorders). 5) Vitamin deficiencies: folic acid or vitamin B12. 6) Hemolysis. 7) Aluminum intoxication. 8) Osteitis fibrosa cystica.

Iron Evaluation: During PROCRIT therapy, absolute or functional iron deficiency may develop. Functional iron deficiency, with normal ferritin levels but low transferrin saturation, is presumably due to the inability to mobilize iron stores rapidly enough to support increased erythropoiesis. Transferrin saturation should be at least 20% and ferritin should be at least 100 ng/mL.

Prior to and during PROCRIT therapy, the patient's iron status, including transferrin saturation (serum iron divided by iron binding capacity) and serum ferritin, should be evaluated. Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron to increase or maintain transferrin saturation to levels which will adequately support erythropoiesis stimulated by PROCRIT.

Drug Interactions: No evidence of interaction of PROCRIT with other drugs was observed in the course of clinical trials.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: Carcinogenic potential of PROCRIT has not been evaluated. PROCRIT does not induce bacterial gene mutation (Ames Test), chromosomal aberrations in mammalian cells, micronuclei in mice, or gene mutation at the HGPRT locus. In female rats treated intravenously (IV) with PROCRIT, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Pregnancy Category C: PROCRIT has been shown to have adverse effects in rats when given in doses 5 times the human dose. There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. PROCRIT should be used during pregnancy only if potential benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus.

In studies in female rats, there were decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, delayed eyelid opening, delayed ossification, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. In female rats treated IV, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Nursing Mothers: Postnatal observations of the live offspring (F1 generation) of female rats treated with PROCRIT during gestation and lactation revealed decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, eyelid opening, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. It is not known whether PROCRIT is excreted in human milk. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be exercised when PROCRIT is administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use: See WARNINGS, Pediatric Use.

Pediatric HIV-Infected Patients: Published literature has reported the use of PROCRIT in 20 zidovudine-treated anemic HIV-infected pediatric patients ages 8 months to 17 years, treated with 50 to 400 U/kg subcutaneously (SC) or IV, 2 to 3 times per week (BIW to TIW). Increases in hemoglobin levels and in reticulocyte counts, and decreases in or elimination of blood transfusions were observed.

Hypertension: Exacerbation of hypertension has not been observed in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients treated with PROCRIT. However, PROCRIT should be withheld in these patients if preexisting hypertension is uncontrolled, and should not be started until blood pressure (BP) is controlled. In double-blind studies, a single seizure has been experienced by a patient treated with PROCRIT.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

Adverse events reported in clinical trials with PROCRIT in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients were consistent with the progression of HIV infection. In double-blind, placebo-controlled studies of 3-months duration involving approximately 300 zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients, adverse events with an incidence of ≥10% in either patients treated with PROCRIT or placebo-treated patients were:

Percent of Patients Reporting Event: Event followed by Patients Treated With PROCRIT (N=144) first, Placebo-Treated Patients (N=153) second:
Pyrexia 38%, 29%; Fatigue 25%, 31%; Headache 19%, 14%; Cough 18%, 14%; Diarrhea 16%, 18%; Rash 16%, 8%; Congestion, Respiratory 15%, 10%; Nausea 15%, 12%; Shortness of Breath 14%, 13%; Asthenia 11%, 14%; Skin Reaction (Administration Site) 10%, 7%; Dizziness 9%, 10%.

There were no statistically significant differences between treatment groups in the incidence of the above events.

In the 297 patients studied, PROCRIT was not associated with significant increases in opportunistic infections or mortality. In 71 patients from this group treated with PROCRIT at 150 U/kg TIW, serum p24 antigen levels did not appear to increase. Preliminary data showed no enhancement of HIV replication in infected cell lines in vitro.

Peripheral white blood cell and platelet counts are unchanged following PROCRIT therapy.

Allergic Reactions: Two zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients had urticarial reactions within 48 hours of their first exposure to study medication. One patient was treated with PROCRIT and one was treated with placebo (PROCRIT vehicle alone). Both patients had positive immediate skin tests against their study medication with a negative saline control. The basis for this apparent preexisting hypersensitivity to components of the PROCRIT formulation is unknown, but may be related to HIV-induced immunosuppression or prior exposure to blood products.

Seizures: In double-blind and open-label trials of PROCRIT in zidovudine-treated HIV-infected patients, 10 patients have experienced seizures. In general, these seizures appear to be related to underlying pathology such as meningitis or cerebral neoplasms, not PROCRIT therapy.

OVERDOSAGE

The maximum amount of PROCRIT that can be safely administered in single or multiple doses has not been determined. Doses of up to 1500 U/kg TIW for 3 to 4 weeks have been administered to adults without any direct toxic effects of PROCRIT itself. Therapy with PROCRIT can result in polycythemia if the HCT is not carefully monitored and the dose appropriately adjusted. If the suggested target range is exceeded, PROCRIT may be temporarily withheld until the HCT returns to the suggested target range; PROCRIT therapy may then be resumed using a lower dose (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). If polycythemia is of concern, phlebotomy may be indicated to decrease the HCT.

DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

Prior to beginning PROCRIT, it is recommended that the endogenous serum erythropoietin level be determined (prior to transfusion). Available evidence suggests that patients receiving zidovudine with endogenous serum erythropoietin levels >500 mU/mL are unlikely to respond to therapy with PROCRIT.

Starting Dose: For adult patients with serum erythropoietin levels ≤500 mU/mL who are receiving a dose of zidovudine ≤4200 mg/week, the recommended starting dose of PROCRIT is 100 U/kg as an IV or SC injection TIW for 8 weeks. For pediatric patients, see PRECAUTIONS, Pediatric Use.

Increase Dose: During the dose adjustment phase of therapy, the HCT should be monitored weekly. If the response is not satisfactory in terms of reducing transfusion requirements or increasing HCT after 8 weeks of therapy, the dose of PROCRIT can be increased by 50-100 U/kg TIW. Response should be evaluated every 4-8 weeks thereafter and the dose adjusted accordingly by 50-100 U/kg increments TIW. If patients have not responded satisfactorily to a PROCRIT dose of 300 U/kg TIW, it is unlikely that they will respond to higher doses of PROCRIT.

Maintenance Dose: After attainment of the desired response (ie, reduced transfusion requirements or increased HCT), the dose of PROCRIT should be titrated to maintain the response based on factors such as variations in zidovudine dose and the presence of intercurrent infectious or inflammatory episodes. If the HCT exceeds 40%, the dose should be discontinued until the HCT drops to 36%. The dose should be reduced by 25% when treatment is resumed and then titrated to maintain the desired HCT.

STORAGE

Store at 2° to 8°C (36° to 46°F). Do not freeze or shake.

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ORTHO BIOTECH

Manufactured by: Amgen Inc., US Lic. # 1080, Thousand Oaks, California 91320-1789
Distributed by: **Ortho Biotech Products, L.P.**, Raritan, New Jersey 08869-0670
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When you're living with or threatened by the virus.

Kwabena Rainey Cheeks

I have been in the hospital three times. The first time, in 1990, I was told I would never walk and that I would be dead by Christmas. I asked the doctor who told him this, and he answered, simply, "This is my professional opinion." Everyone has a turning point in his or her life, something that says give up and die or fight back. And at that moment in 1990, I had to make a choice: agree with his professional opinion, lie down, wait for Christmas and die, or, get up and do something that would make things count. If I did die at Christmas, at least I would have made a mark — at least someone would know my name. So I stopped worrying about dying. Death does not scare me. The truth is everyone is going to face it. All that is important is what we do while we are here. I love life, so I make every moment count for something.

I believe adversity comes into our lives just to help us discover what we truly believe. Do you believe more in the problems or your ability to solve them? Do you believe more in your fear or your faith? I personally believe in God, and my God has prepared me for any and every thing. So the choice of what to believe in is mine — and if I don't have the answer, I know how to find it.

To survive in this world, we have to first believe that we are worth being here, that our lives count. We must love ourselves so much that we won't let anyone or anything take us out. When I look back over my life, and think of the things I have overcome this far, how can I give up? When that's not enough, I think about my ancestors and what they had to survive. My mother never had a computer or a 401k plan. She didn't have a car; she could not even drive. But she worked two jobs everyday, volunteered in the public school for over 20 years and raised 6 children and 8 grand children. She was an ordinary black women — a survivor.

When I think about what my mother did with what she had, there is no way I can even think about giving up. Does that mean things are any easier for me? Has racism or classism or homophobia or any of the other "isms" been removed for my world? Not at all, that's not the question or the problem. The question is what am I willing to get up and do about it.

> **"When it comes to your survival, say yes to life! Let go of anyone and anything that does not support you."**

You have a choice. You can be on the sideline or in the game. You can always find a reason not to do something – we all do from time to time. But when it comes to your survival, say yes to life! Let go of anyone and anything that does not support you. I know this is not as easy as it sounds, but if it is worth having, it's worth fighting for. The challenge is finding your passion — what makes you happy, what brings you joy — and going for it.

Too often we think of survivors as people that have climbed some exceptionally great mountain, or have crossed some unimaginable ocean. But we all have mountains to climb and rivers to cross in our lives. Before David fought Goliath, he said, I have fought loins and bears, what is a giant? So the next time your Goliath is ready to fight, remember you have already fought lions and bears. Get up and go do battle! The next time you are looking for the survivor, just go to the mirror and look in your own eyes, you will see the greatest survivor of them all — yourself.

About the Author: Kwabena Rainey Cheeks was a founding member of the Unity Fellowship Church Movement, and has been an HIV/AIDS and LGBT issues activist for more than 20 years. He currently ministers to people living with HIV/AIDS and the African American LGBT community in Washington, D.C.

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Congresswoman Barbara Lee: Heiress to the Black Progressive Throne

words by Kai Wright

BlackAIDS.org U.S. Editor Kai Wright talks with the Bay Area's firebrand representative in the U.S. House.

It's about fighting terrorism, yes. It's also about resources for HIV and AIDS, for housing, for education, for all of those efforts that were challenges before 9/11 and should remain on our agenda subsequent to 9/11. ... That is the challenge for us as progressives, as people of color, as African Americans in the United States Congress. We must make sure that our agenda remains central to the national debate on resources.
— Rep. Lee on the federal budget

When Democrat Barbara Lee stormed into the U.S. House as the representative for California's 9th District in 1998, she had big shoes to fill. The district, centered in Berkley and Oakland, had been represented by progressive icon Ron Dellums since 1970, and its historically radical constituents had come to expect a certain level of national rabblerousing on their behalf. Black America at large had also long counted Dellums among its most trusted national leaders — and as the community's first line of defense on Capitol Hill.

But Lee, who had previously spent more than 10 years as a Dellums advisor, proved more than capable of keeping the Bay Area's political fires burning. After finishing out the retiring Dellums' term, she won re-election with 82 percent of the vote in 1999. In the few short years since then, she's catapulted herself into a national and international leadership role within both African American and progressive communities. And from her seat on the House International Relations Committee, she has stood as one of Congress' most vocal agitators on the topic of U.S. support for international AIDS efforts. In late June, she took a break from the House's debates over prescription drug coverage for seniors and spoke with BlackAIDS.org about the Bush administration's record on AIDS, federal budget priorities, and the growing debate over HIV prevention strategies for young people.

Wright: Let's start with talking about the Bush administration a little bit. We're about a year and a half into the administration. Some folks have been critical of their record on HIV and AIDS. Others have said you know they don' t have the staff they need, we can't be too critical yet. Others have said they're doing a great job. What would you say about where we're at? How would you rate the Bush administration thus far?

Rep. Lee: First, let me say that this is the greatest pandemic of all time. And I believe that the Bush administration has not moved quick enough with their strategy and their initiative. Of course, we're supporting [an appropriation of] one billion dollars with the Global AIDS Fund, which we actually established through legislation that Congressman Leach [R-Iowa] and myself introduced and was signed into law. It is the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act of 2000.

Well, it has taken a while just to gear up the United States participation in that effort. And now we still do not see a major financial commitment on behalf of the United States to this fund. And I believe that we must work very hard with the administration to get them to understand the fact that this Global Fund is a fund that would allow for the leveraging of nine to ten billion dollars a year —which is what [United Nations Secretary General] Kofi Annan has indicated we need to just begin to make a dent in this. So I believe there's a large learning curve that's taking place. And that, while the administration is at least saying that they're committed to addressing the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, that they really do have to put their money where their mouth is. And so far we have not seen that financial commitment.

Wright: What about that same question for your colleagues in Congress? As a body, how do you think you guys have done this session so far on HIV?

Lee: Well, I think that on a bipartisan basis — you know, I've worked with Congressman Hyde [R-Ill.] and Congressman Lantos [D-Calif.], and we actually passed an authorization bill. There was, I believe, $750 million for the Global Fund, and the total I believe was over a billion dollars. So I believe that members of Congress are beginning to see the real emergency nature of this pandemic. But quite frankly the appropriations process has been fairly disappointing, because I believe this year only $200 million was appropriated [Congress first authorizes and then appropriates all federal spending]. And, again, we tried for at least $500 million in appropriations on our side. So it's moving too slowly for me, too slowly for people who are living and dying. And I think that the United States Congress must make this a priority. I see that more members of congress are beginning to discuss HIV and AIDS, to talk about their outrage at what has resulted, and also are beginning to want to work to do something. But I don't see, yet, quite the major push that I think we need.

Wright: What's the problem on the appropriations end? There've been a few efforts, most recently with the emergency supplemental funding bills, to get that Global AIDS Fund money up. Why hasn't it been successful so far? And also, what's the next step in that process?

Lee: Well, you know, the president has indicated that he doesn't want to put too much money until he sees how effective the programs are, where the money's going, that the money is actually being used for what it should be used. But what I say is: How can you be effective and how can we really begin to impact this pandemic unless you put the money out there and allow these initiatives to work? So it's a catch-22. You hear members of Congress saying, 'Oh yes, yes, yes. We want do this. But we want see how these few dollars are going to work first.' And I'm saying come on, that's not very realistic. And I think that's very dangerous, because while we're around measuring results people are dying. This is something that we must invest in at the same time that we're working to measure results and change strategies as we see they need to be changed. Put money

Congresswoman Barbara Lee

where we know it will work. And there are some proven initiatives —look at Uganda. There are countries that have models of success. So we —I believe that we can't wait to see how these few dollars are going to impact the pandemic before we put more money in it. I just think that's a cop out.

Wright: The White House recently announced one initiative that they are taking, this $500 million for focusing on mother to child transmissions in sub-Saharan Africa, and I believe actually globally. You reacted less than enthusiastically to that proposal. Why wasn't that good? What was the problem with that?

Lee: Well, first, yes we want to see more money in mother to child transmission efforts. But number one, this is not new money. Contrary to what they're saying, they're robbing Peter to pay Paul. And that's outrageous given the enormous trillions of dollars in tax cuts that this country has provided for the wealthy. You know, we need new money. Secondly, it's not enough, and it had no impact in terms of resources into the Global Fund. And I just think it's a good message to send. I think the policy direction and the raising of awareness about the desperate need to put resources into to mother to child transmission makes a lot of sense. But clearly this is not a billion dollars, and this is not new money, and this is not a comprehensive perspective on the pandemic. We need prevention, treatment, education, care, vaccine development —we need a multifaceted approach to this pandemic. And so by looking at one strategy and not the entire way to approach this, the interrelatedness of these — the way you approach HIV and AIDS, as I said earlier: prevention, education, treatment, care and vaccine. I think it's just looking at a piece of the problem.

Wright: On the domestic front, we're similarly facing flat funding for a number of programs — ADAP, the Minority AIDS Initiative. Do you know, are there efforts within Congress now to boost those spending bills before they reach [fiscal year 2003]? And how do they fare if so?

Lee: We're working very hard with the Appropriations Committee to try to increase this level of funding, because flat funding certainly is not acceptable given the nature of the pandemic in our communities of color here in America. I mean this is a global pandemic, and we work at this on the Hill in that perspective: it's domestic, it's international, it's global. And we're working very hard with Congresswoman Christian-Christenson [D-Virgin Islands] to try to increase the resources for the domestic minority initiatives also.

Wright: For all of these funding conversations, there is a perspective that says: We're facing a faltering economy, we're facing what's being described as a war on terror, we have this crisis with Medicare, can we really expect —indeed, can we really afford, as a nation —to spend more on these sorts of things at a time like this?

Lee: Well the Bush administration somehow found a way to afford a two trillion dollar tax cut. They found a way to afford a huge increase in the military budget, close to $400 billion. Much of this related to weapons systems to fight a cold war that doesn't exist. So it's about priorities. It's about fighting terrorism, yes. It's also about resources for HIV and AIDS, for housing, for education, for all of those efforts that were challenges before 9/11 and should remain on our agenda subsequent to 9/11. We continue to fight the budget priority fight in Congress, and I think that is the challenge for us as progressives, as people of color, as African Americans in the United States Congress. We must make sure that our agenda remains central to the national debate on resources.

Wright: Finally, you've also been a part of this prevention debate, in terms of abstinence-only versus comprehensive sex education and how we deal with young people and HIV prevention. And you have a bill, that I believe has already been introduced, that's seeking funding for comprehensive sex education. Can you tell me a little bit about what that bill is seeking to accomplish and why we need it?

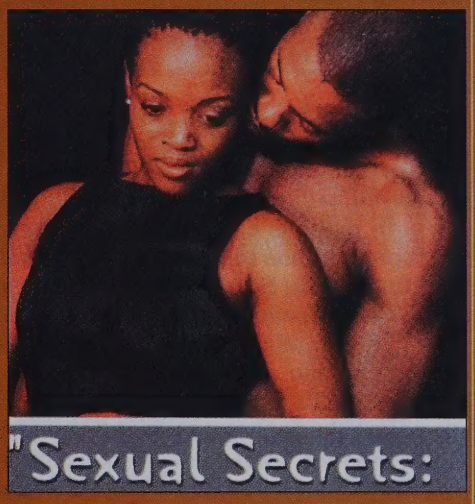
Lee: Sure. You know in the 1996 pan of welfare reform laws somehow —and I wasn't here

Continued on page 75

Listen Up Sistahs!

Don't Be in Denial About Your Down Low Man

Calling ALL Sistahs! Yes, even women in the life [because surveys show that many black 'lesbians' are still having sex, every now and then, with a man.]



The Danger of Life on the "Down Low"

by Rennetta Mulkey and Kozetta Jane Harris

Every now and then we may hear whispers about a male friend, family member, church member or co-worker who is "living on the down low". Men "on the down low" are self-identified heterosexuals who enjoy having sex with other men. Men on the down low profess to love women and are often married or in committed relationships with a woman. While women may hold their heart, their sexual desire for men is strong enough to pull them into a dual life, one of secrecy, deception and danger. Not the cloak and dagger danger found in Bond movies, but the danger that comes from exposing themselves and the women in their lives to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV.

One out of every 160 Black women is living with HIV and of those who contract the virus through heterosexual sex, an unknown number were unknowingly at an increased risk because their partners were secretly having unprotected sex with men.

Picture this. Linda and Tyrone are happily married with children. One day their son Tyrone is involved in a car accident while being driven to a pee-wee football game by a family friend. Tyrone senior and Linda rush to the hospital. While their son is being treated in the ER, a nurse suggests that they donate blood. They both readily agree to the minor procedure hoping that their efforts will help save their son or another child. Thankfully, their son is not critically injured. Tyrone and Linda are noticeably relieved by the news but notice that a look of concern remains on the faces of the doctor and nurses treating their son.

After Lil' T is moved to a hospital room for observation, a nurse pulls Tyrone aside to tell him that his blood tested positive for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, HIV. Months pass before Tyrone is able to tell Linda that he is HIV+. Linda listens to the news, not believing what her husband was so reluctantly tells her. She is inconsolable.

Her marriage, she believed, was a good one. Tyrone is an exemplary father, a good provider...a good man. She moves through each day as if in a daze, not understanding how this could have happened to her, to her family.

Tyrone vehemently denies stepping out with another woman. Linda is angry and confused. How else could this have happened? Repeatedly she accuses Tyrone of messing around, of using drugs – the only ways that she knows he can get such a dreaded disease. Finally, Tyrone admits to "kickin it" with several of his "boys" throughout, and before, their marriage. He assures her that he is not gay, that he loves her and does not want to break up their family.

Unfortunately, this scenario isn't as far-fetched as many would like to believe. According to some, living on the down low is far from rare in the Black community. Some suggest that many Black men choose this road because they are afraid to be identified as gay, knowing that homophobia (a hatred for or prejudice against gays) is openly expressed in our community.

Listen Up Sistahs!

Others believe that these men are in denial about their sexuality and refuse to fully embrace it. They use their relationships with women to distract themselves, temporarily, from their desire for men. While both reasons can be true, neither addresses the repercussions of irresponsible sexual behavior; the impact upon Black families, Black children and the overall strength of the Black community.

Ultimately, whether Tyrone had a sexual affair with a man or a woman, is not the issue. While Tyrone's decision to cheat on his wife can cause irreparable damage to his marriage, his decision not to practice safer sex in his liaisons with other men has jeopardized Linda's life, as well as his own.

By now, everyone knows that HIV is not a "gay disease". But what many still do not appreciate is that HIV can be transmitted during unprotected sex with a woman or with a man, in a seemingly committed relationship or in a casual hook-up. The simple fact is that anyone having unprotected sex, whether oral, vaginal or anal, is at risk of getting or passing the virus.

Women need to question their potential partner about his sexual history before the relationship turned sexual. It was suggested that questions should not only center around how many women, or men, their man has slept with, but also if he had multiple partners at one period, if he regularly practiced safer sex, and if he has been faithful in past committed relationships.

If Linda and Tyrone had discussed their past and current sexual behavior, could the tragedy have been avoided? There are no guarantees. People are known to downplay their sexual history, especially when questions are posed by a potential or current mate. Had Linda asked Tyrone about his sexual history and behavior, is it likely that he would have confessed to sexual encounters with men?

In this time of deadly sexually transmitted diseases, every sexually active female must be fully conscious of the risks she may be taking. At the end of the day, very few of us will be able to say that she has lived without ever placing herself at risk. The key, the challenge, is to reduce our risk, to be responsible in our sexual relationships and not to trust others to keep us safe.

The only known way to reduce our risk of contracting HIV through sexual activity is to use latex barriers (condoms, dental dams) each and every time we have sex. Yes, it is possible that your man may be living on the down low, sleeping with other women, or "shooting up" now and then. This, we may not know or even suspect. It isn't fair, and it ain't easy, but it is our reality. As women, we must protect ourselves, there is no other way around it.

NO More Secrets, NO More Lies":

A Video Review by Kinaya Jolomi Ade

I sat astonished as I viewed this powerful 28 minute video tape entitled *No More Secrets, No More Lies: Brothers Living Life on the Down Low*. J. L. King produces the video, and he has decided to openly talk about the double life that he and other "down low" men have led. This life is not one of infidelity where the brother is having an affair with another woman, but one in which the brother is having sexual liaisons with other men (he may even have a special man on the side).

King states that most women are unaware of this secretive life; and after interviewing several sisters, I tend to agree. These down low men are African-American men who don't consider themselves to be gay or even bisexual, but secretly have sex with other men. Many are in serious relationships with women, and many of the down low men are married with children.

According to King, these men do everything that they can, not to expose themselves. They may be among those that gay bash. Many claim to detest homosexuals. There are no stereotypical gay mannerisms to clock, and it appears that they have no gay friends. They are skilled in making sure that there is nothing in their demeanor that suggests that they are anything but completely heterosexual. King further states that love is not involved with their male sexual partners, that is why these down low men can lead double lives. King says that they love the women that they are in relationship with, but they also love "kickin it" with their dude. [I was unable to determine whether or not King still lives life on the down low.]

There were two points in the film that I feel compelled to bring to your attention.

1). King states that not one of the last 5 women that he has had sex with asked him to wear a condom. [He did not state whether or not he did.]

2). He speaks of a married friend who contracted HIV from a down low relationship. This friend is a

father of a newborn baby, and did not know how to tell his wife. King suggested that since this friend had recently returned from Las Vegas, that he tell his wife that he had been with a prostitute, knowing that eventually she, and the African-American community, would forgive him. King warned that if his friend told his wife the truth, he would be ostracized by his wife and his community.

After viewing the video, I felt compelled to immediately educate every sister that I knew. The film was both educational and enlightening. Sisters, ask questions and observe behavior like you've never done before, your life may depend on it.

For More Information Check out:"No More Secrets, NO MORE LIES!" video : J. L. King : King & King Training: www.livingdownlow.com; "Black Men Living on the Down Low": Reprint of Mar 15, 2001 article from USA Today: www.usastuff.20m.com; "The Low Down on Down Low Culture" by Steven G. Fullwood,www.africana.com/column/bl_voices_60.ht; "A Deadly Taboo - Is homophobia in the black community fanning the flames of HIV infection among African-Americans, the hardest-hit population outside sub-Saharan Africa?" by Alicia Montgomery: http://dir.salon.com/news/feature/2001/06/22/aids/index.html These articles are reprinted by permission from the website www.sisterlove.org [Newletter-LoveNotes]

Nationwide Initiative Launched to Fight HIV/AIDS Among African Americans

More than 150 organizations in more than 60 cities across the country will participate in the third annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD) Feb. 7, 2003.

NBHAAD is a nationwide campaign that addresses the HIV/AIDS "State of Emergency" among African-Americans. The objective of NBHAAD is to encourage African-Americans to get educated, get tested and get involved to fight the disease. On Feb. 7, local HIV/AIDS outreach organizations across the country will conduct programs in their communities including free HIV testing, town meetings and youth rallies.

For more information about NBHAAD and to locate local organizations participating in the campaign, log on to www.blackaidsday.org

Congresswoman Barbara Lee

Continued from page 72

at the time —somehow they put in a provision that only allowed federal funds [for sex education] to be used by states that would accept abstinence-only programs in terms of sex education for young people. So many states, most states, have taken the money because they agreed to teach abstinence-only. I'm pleased that in California we decided not to accept the money, because we know that abstinence-only is not a strategy that will provide for pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS/STD prevention with young people. So I introduced a bill that would require us to fund programs and to allow states to teach comprehensive sex education programs. Sure abstinence-only is a strategy, but given the dangers of venereal disease and of HIV and AIDS and pregnancy — teenage pregnancy — I believe — and many, many members of Congress believe, and this is on a bipartisan basis — that a comprehensive approach really is the healthy approach and the realistic approach and the way that we really will get to our young people with regard to healthcare and pregnancy prevention. And we're moving forward with our bill. You know, quite frankly, we've got the right wing and the Christian Coalition [against us]. There are those that would not want to see this strategy be part of our [national HIV prevention] strategy. But I think it's just downright outrageous to penalize states, to penalize young people, with the withdrawal of federal funds if in fact they want to learn more about sex education. [There has never been federal funding explicitly earmarked for comprehensive sex education. The 1996 law therefore does not actually withdraw funds from states that teach safer sex, but rather sets aside special funding exclusively for abstinence-only programs.]

This article is reprinted by permission from the website of the African American AIDS Institute, www.BlackAIDS.org

Maisha Yearwood
continued from page 59

Although Yearwood chose to come out to parents formally, her sexuality had never really been a secret. "I was the girl in high school who was obviously gay." She attended the progressive high school at Friends Seminary in the East Village, the alma mater of Live Schrieber, Kyra Sedgewick, and good girlfriend Amanda Peet, star of *The Whole Nine Yards* and *Changing Lanes.*

"She hasn't changed much," Peet told me. "She's one of the most charismatic people that I know. She really lights up a room." Did she and Yearwood dream of the day they'd see their names in lights in Hollywood? Peet laughs at me. "Honestly, we were thinking about the after-school basketball game against Brooklyn Friends. And I want to put it on record that Yearwood couldn't make the girls basketball team. Sh"s a very prissy girl at heart." Although Yearwood pined for many of her fellow classmates, Amanda wasn't one of them. Even if she can play ball. "Amanda wasn't my type, I wasn't even sweatin' her like that."

> "L.A.'s devoid of a lesbian community that I understand, but I manage to find women to date."

Yearwood's an activist, but she's not pushing her gay agenda on Hollywood even as movies get further and further removed from reality. "I don't think anybody's trying to buy anything about a lesbian Black woman or an Iranian woman or a Latino woman. I don't think the studio is trying to hear anything like that," she says. "Hollywood's safe—500 steps behind reality and the way we live our lives." But, she puts a gay character in everything she writes "mostly because we exist. Everyone has a brother or a cousin or a nephew or something. Especially now." Of course, Yearwood changes the dynamics of the game just by walking into the rarified, mostly white, executive suites of studios around town. *The Two-Year Mark* is actually based on her own relationship with a refined girlfriend who had to move with her into her parents' Harlem brownstone. "I guess it's going to start with someone like me, who'll come up with the story," Yearwood says. "Or it's going to be a Halle Berry type who's a lesbian. If I'm not going to do it, who's going to do it?"

After ending a three-year relationship, Yearwood's single now. "Very single," she emphasizes. "Loving singledom, actually. It's very hard to date in L.A. L.A.'s devoid of a lesbian community that I understand, but I manage to find women to date." As if on cue, Yearwood's new friend, a woman she met in Oakland, approaches from a nearby table. This is why Yearwood could barely focus on me. I can feel the love is new. She introduces me then explains her big goals. "I want to be a writer who delivers," she begins. "I want to go to a movie one afternoon and see one of my movies. It's going to be fucking incredible the day I can do that." She smiles broadly. "I'll go every weekend. I'll go to Magic Johnson's theater first. Then, I'll go downtown. Then I'll take my friends. And once that happens," she pauses for a second, glances at her friend, takes a breath. "I'll find other goals."

Maurice Hines
continued from page 53

Choreography and Dancing," Maurice laments, "I was very gracious and thanked them, but without her to share it with it wasn't the same. I just do the work now and hope I can pass it on to the younger generation."

Maurice is currently limiting his performing schedule and is concentrating more on mentoring, choreographing and directing.

"When I'm on tour I teach free jazz and hip-hop classes to the kids. I stopped tapping once my mother passed away because I did that for her.

"I love choreographing and directing. I love being with dancers. I don't have to be in the front anymore. I'm 58 years old, looking fabulous, but I've been doing this since I was 5 years old." And Maurice can still do those 5 o'clock kicks!

Despite his age, there's no chance of Maurice Hines throwing in the towel anytime soon. His busy schedule would challenge artists a third his age, and pity and praise the poor novice lucky enough to fall under the whip of this talented perfectionist. "A lot of the young kids today take one dance class and think they're ready. What are you going to do? Take a hip-hop class and go audition for Alvin Ailey? I don't think so. You must be versatile. Do jazz, tap, ballet, Dunham, Horton. Do all the great techniques so that you have options in life. And learn your theatre. Theatre discipline is top-of-the-line discipline.

"I am so grateful to have a dance background. There were times when I was doing eight shows a week and I didn't feel like coming in for the matinee. But I did

> "What are you going to do? Take a hip-hop class and go audition for Alvin Ailey? I don't think so. You must be versatile. Do jazz, tap, ballet, Dunham, Horton. Do all the great techniques so that you have options in life."

anyway. I remember when I didn't feel like taking class, and I did it anyway, and the teacher said, 'OK, get that leg up to here,' and I did it. Discipline. Dance, theatre disciplines. That's what has kept me young."

So when all is said and done, what does dancer, singer, actor, choreographer, and director Maurice Hines want to be said of him?

"I just want it to be said that I was a good person who did the right thing, especially for my people. There have been opportunities to further my career by doing the wrong thing with regards to my people. But I was never about that.

"I am a Black man in this society. I represent that. I happen to like representing that. People have said to me 'I don't like it when they call you a Black dancer.' And I say, 'It don't bother me because that's what I am.' I bring all the Blackness to it: Cab, Lena, and The Nicholas Brothers. They brought all this to us. So you can call me Black all you want. I love it!"

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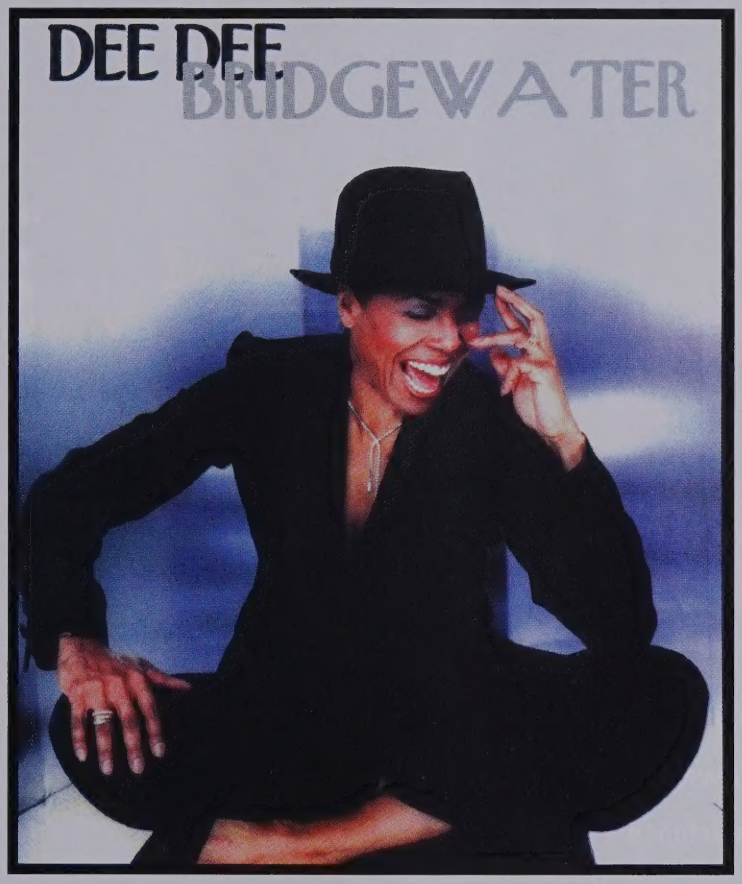
Dee Dee has been hailed as the heir apparent to the Jazz vocal legacy by the passing of giants Carmen McCrae, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughan. She saw the tradition dying and decided to take up the mantle. She even toured for several years in For Ella, a show that paid homage to her musical idol, Ella Fitzgerald. After the show's closing, Bridgewater decided that it was time to do something else. She wasn't sure what, just that it was time to be herself for a while. She had done music that was old, some of it borrowed, and much of it blue. (Her debut album is titled *Afro Blue*.) It was time for a foray into her own territory. The result is her latest CD, *This is New.*



The new project is the first album that Bridgewater has recorded that focuses solely on the work of one composer: Kurt Weill. The inspiration for the album was Bridgewater's attendance at a centennial tribute to the composer in Poland. She loved the music but noted that most of the interpretations of it were dark. "I found in his songs an irony and a wry humor, which poked fun at human foibles," Bridgewater said. "I wanted to give that take on the work." She began to listen to everything that Weill had collaborated on—even a work for which Langston Hughes had written the lyrics. The "storyish" character of the songs allow her to imbue the songs with her natural sense of theatre.

This is not an album to listen to if you're in a hurry, or of you need some background music. Bridgewater is a storyteller whose tools are impeccable phrasing and a palette of thousands of colors for words, the envy of instruments made of brass and wood and skin. Perhaps her mature artistic sense is a byproduct of the comfort she feels in her body since turning 50.

Bridgewater describes a new, heightened sensuality, and says that onstage her personae is more like Millie Jackson than the demure and aloof singer usually associated with jazz. "I don't know what it is, but I am loving it. It's almost raunchy," Bridgewater revealed, "I'm more comfortable in my body than I've ever been. I feel so sensuous ... and I am loving it."

Singing has been called the most intimate art form, one which summons every emotion ever experienced in the artist's life. So, how does Bridgewater handle a lyric? She pauses, distracted by the tinkering of a refrigerator repairman. She pads into the kitchen, and the tinkering stops. She re-enters, smiling, voice gliding across the gleaming hardwood floor. She eases into the architectural comfort of the sofa: "I take the lyric in—in my head first—kind of let it simmer inside, make a thousand decisions at once. What kind of inflection? Should I bend the note? What color? Try something different or sing it straight? But eventually, and on beat, I have to let it go on a musical breath."

The connections with the late Phyllis Hyman are evident. They'd both contributed to the film *The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh*—Bridgewater as an actress, Hyman as a singer on its soundtrack. Bridgewater and Hyman had portrayed the same character in the Broadway smash Sophisticated Ladies. "I loved Phyllis. I miss Phyllis," Bridgewater lamented, "I lost my voice the night of her death. I sang with great difficulty."

After that show, a couple of Hyman's "handlers" came backstage to, Bridgewater thought, lament the loss of a great singer. After exchanging niceties, they expressed interest in working with Bridgewater in a way that fanned a nonchalant hand at the death of Hyman. Bridgewater was outraged: "Get the fuck out of my dressing room!" The incident left her shaken and brought an epiphany: "We really have to look out for one another. In this business it can be dog-eat-dog, and we can get very isolated. We have to check in on one another a little more often."

What's next for Bridgewater? "I don't know," Bridgewater ponders, "Well, I have an idea, but I'm not ready to talk about it just yet." Bridgewater has learned to hold her ideas close until they are in motion. She assures that it will allow her to be all of herself, to combine her love and flair for the theatrical, her voice rich and ripe. Sing, baby. Listen.

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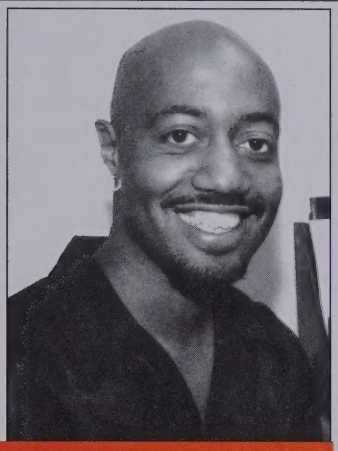
annual march signals new day for Black gay pride celebrations

words by Craig Washington



"When I saw that other folks were in tears, I knew it was all worth it. I knew why this march needs to continue to happen."

Dig, if you will, the picture. It began one year ago as one proud gay brother's dream. In the birthplace of that most renowned dreamer Martin Luther King Jr., a procession of Black gays and lesbians walked tall and jubilant in the second annual Stand Up and Represent Atlanta Black Gay Pride March on Labor Day. It was a crowning culmination capping a glorious weekend of affirmation, revelation, and reverie.

The event drew 400 people, more than twice as many participants as last year's premiere march. Rev. Antonio Jones of Unity Fellowship Church led the joyous crowd in prayer at the pre-march rally in the West End Mall. From there, they took to the streets drawing occasional applause and puzzled stares from onlookers with such chants as "we're Black, we're out, we're proud" and "who let the gays out." "It was like a pep rally and a celebration of freedom," said assistant march coordinator Nikki Young. Police officers flanked the front and back of this lively contingent to ensure protection. But aside from a lone minister who condemned the marchers, there was no opposition reported.

Political leaders and candidates in attendance included Congressman John Lewis and several Atlanta City Council members including Anne Fauver who is openly gay. Georgia State Senator Vincent Fort joined the post-march rally at West End Park.

"When I kept looking back from the frontline, I saw so many people," beamed march founder Anthony Antoine McWilliams. "When I saw that [assistant march coordinator] Shane Johnson and other folks were in tears, I knew it was all worth it. I knew why this march needs to continue to happen."

For McWilliams, a prominent HIV educator and performance artist, it was once again literally a dream come true. Last year he dreamt of a group of Black gay men marching out in the daylight. "When I woke up, I thought, 'oh, that would be cute,' but I didn't think it could be a reality." When a fellow activist challenged McWilliams to realize his vision, he gathered others including chief coordinator Jimmie Scott to plan the first known Black gay march in less than two months. Despite limited publicity and inclement weather, approximately 200 people marched in the rain from the steps of the State Capitol building to the Martin Luther King Center for Non-Violent Social Change.

The 2002 march organizers decided to place the march route entirely within a Black neighborhood, the historic West End district. "We wanted to bring it into an historically Black community that was instrumental to the civil rights struggle," said Michael Slaughter, board chair of In The Life Atlanta, the official Atlanta Black Gay Pride organization. "We also needed to build relationships instead of separating [ourselves] from our people." Youth organizer J. Lawrence Warren noted, "It's about time we represent in our own spaces. But it's not about where we do it, as long as we do it."

Warren also emphasized the significance of the march for LGBT youth: "The march gives them something to look up to. When we are part of a community that is proud of itself, it builds confidence." Warren and Young, both 23, called for increased inclusion of youth in future events. Young also noted segregation between men and women throughout the weekend. "I saw small cliques of women among a slew of men. If you look at the overall participation, it's a male-heavy event."

Weeks before the event, the planning committee encountered some local resistance to the post-march rally convening in West End Park. The West End Neighborhood Planning Unit (N.P.U.) initially declined the committee's application. When the decision was challenged by a member, the NPU overturned the vote and approved the rally. Several march organizers speculated that the lukewarm reception may not have been entirely homophobic, since they had not established any prior presence in the West End. "This was a lesson," McWilliams observed. "We can make a difference, and there is acceptance for us in our community."

The march concluded a five-day series of Pride events coordinated by In The Life Atlanta. Most of the activities were held at the Renaissance Waverly, the official host hotel. The weekend commenced with a rousing candlelight vigil led by Pastor YaQar of Alpha and Omega AIDS Foundation. The opening reception featured spoken word and African dance performances. Keynote speaker Mayor Shirley Franklin, Atlanta's first African American female mayor, also became the first Atlanta mayor to address Black Gay Pride. "The progress you have made is wonderful, and I hope we can continue to make progress in the area of gay rights together," she said. The following day included a generous selection of workshops, panel discussions, and a health fair. On the day before the march, 50 attendants flocked to a worship service at the hotel, which was followed by a Pride brunch at the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Center. Slaughter deemed this year's Pride an overall success: "This event allowed African-American LGBT people to come together and celebrate our uniqueness."

At one of the weekend's high points, Congressman Lewis drew a standing ovation for his remarks at a discussion about political involvement. "Things have changed, and its because we got in the way and we agitated. Keep getting in the way and agitating on Black Gay Pride weekend and every day."

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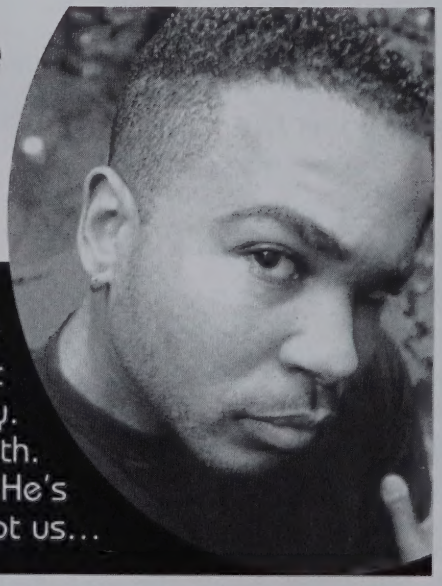

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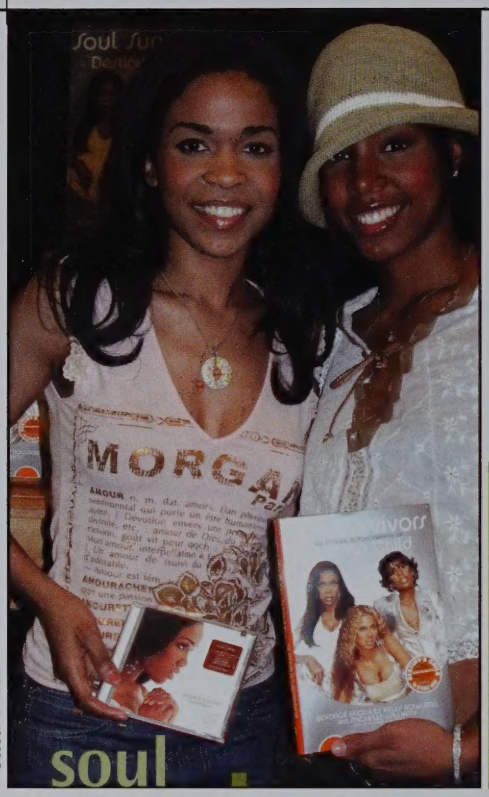


Tina Paul

soul survivor

They have survived the struggles of a budding Texas-bred girl group. They have survived internal strife, the drama, and the media circus of a chart-topping supergroup. Still, Destiny's Child has managed to become one of the best-selling female groups in music history.

Beyoncé Knowles, Kelly Rowland, and Michelle Williams have laid it all on the line in *Soul Survivors: The Official Autobiography of Destiny's Child* (Regan Books). As these bootylicious songbirds spread their wings with solo projects, this book marks the first installment of what will be a long career of soulful music for decades to come.

> "It must be a part of human nature to love drama. We never would have sold as many records—and we never would have been this popular—if our member changes did not happen.
> —Beyoncé Knowles"

literary roundup

reviews by Dr. Alaric Blair

> "The work reads like a conversation with a good friend over cocktails."

Among scholars of literature, there was once a tradition of reviewing books for the purpose of providing some context for their place in the body of scholarship of the Academy (also known as the canon). These days, it appears that people are less concerned about the literariness of books. There is mass appeal for eponymy and fortune. The sad truth is that an infinitesimal percentage of writers (current and dead) have enjoyed fortune and fame—all deserving of their success.

Reviews have become a way of publicizing novels and books of poetry rather than true critique of talent and creativity. No one challenges literature anymore. To do so would appear to undermine the author, especially writers of color. We expect that a critic of color will say that our book is "best-seller" material when it isn't, just because we share an ethnic connection. Personally, I have benefited from constructive criticism as much as I have from the adulations. It was a well-meaning critic's comments that sent me back to my manuscripts and to graduate school in writing.

With more African Americans writing and publishing now than ever, it behooves us (writers, editors, scholars, teachers) to provide some quality control. All books (whether the author tried his/her best or not) shouldn't have been published—not yet. With that, I'd like to begin this journey through our Fall 2002 literary selections.

A bright young writer from Detroit named Brent Dorian Carpenter has written an insightful first novel—

Man of the Cloth (First Books Library). The story begins with a tragic accident that claims the lives of the Catholic church's hierarchy—leaving the church without ordained leadership. The remaining leadership scrambles to keep the church from spinning out of control. The plot thickens when scientists attempt to clone Jesus from DNA taken from the Shroud of Turin. This novel is a true page-turner and will challenge the reader's fundamental beliefs in religious demagoguery and scientific discovery.

Carpenter has penned the most unique story of the summer—one that doesn't necessarily revolve around the vicissitudes of dysfunctional relationships, promiscuous lovers or the lives and times of the Black bourgeoisie—one that this reviewer enjoyed for its sheer "novelty." Get this book to find out if there was a "second resurrection." We've not heard the last of Brent Dorian Carpenter. For, as we sit enjoying his first entry into the literati, his second novel waits in the wings.

Since I'm on the subject of the church, it might be a good idea to discuss another work written by K. Godfrey Easter of Seattle. *Love Lifted Me: In Spite of the Church* (LLM Publishing Group) is an intimate look at one man's struggle to come to terms with his homosexuality and his relationship with the Black church (namely the Church of God in Christ). Though not a new story, it is an important one that Easter brings to bear through his own experiences of isolation from his fellow "Christians." This reviewer can see the cultural and social ramifications of a work such as this being available to those who share in Easter's struggle.

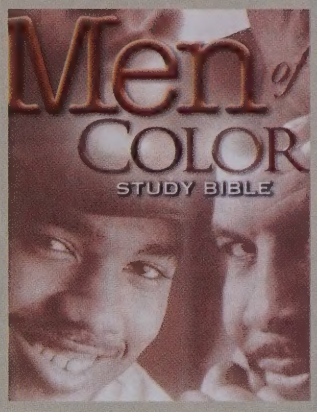
The work (touted as nonfiction) reads like a conversation with a good friend over cocktails at a sparsely peopled club. There's the intrigue of finding new love, controversy in the upper echelons of his church, and the dilemma of raising a son amidst the turmoil of the ever-ending search for his own homosexual identity. Easter tells his story with sincerity and flare; however, the superfluous use of "churchese" is a little unsettling. There are times that his language is fraught with platitudes and is wordy—symptomatic of those loquacious church announcers or of soporific preachers. Many chapter titles are borrowed from hymns of the church so that the reader may find him/herself humming the tunes while reading—an interestingly suggestive device. Whereas the naturalness of speech makes *Love* a realistic read, its clumsiness distracts the reader from fully grasping the genius of this work.

We find, at the conclusion of our conversation with Easter that his life as an openly gay minister of music isn't unlike our own. The fa-

Men of Color Study Bible

review by Jerry Daniels

A small Black-owned business collaborated with 60 African-American religious leaders and scholars, to publish a new Bible interpreted with a Black male perspective.



The Men of Color Study Bible is the product of Nia Publishing Co., an Atlanta-based business founded in October 1998 by Mel Banks II, the company's chief executive officer.

One of the Bible's contributors is nationally known educator and lecturer Jawanza Kunjufu, who wrote a series of books under the title *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys.*

Banks met Kunjufu and some of the contributors of the Men of Color Study Bible while employed at Urban Ministries Inc., another publisher of Bibles based in Chicago and founded by Banks' father, Melvin Banks Sr.

"We tried to get input from folks in all denominations," Banks said.

Interlaced with pages that outline each book of the King James biblical interpretation, *The Men of Color Study Bible* also contains essays that address spirituality and issues specific to the African-American community, but especially those concerning Black men. Some of those issues include the criminal justice system, fathering, marriage, and sexual ethics.

The idea to produce Bibles that address African Americans came while Banks was employed at Urban Ministries Inc. He encountered people doing business with Urban Ministries challenged with the task of getting their children to read the Bible.

"People would ask, 'Is there a Bible my children could relate to?'" he said.

Banks said he approached a number of publishers, including Thomas Nelson Publishing and Zondervan, about putting together a Bible geared toward African Americans.

The response, however, was always: "There was no need for it because Black people already buy the Bible," he said.

GAY REBEL OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE
Selections from the Work of Richard Bruce Nugent
RICHARD BRUCE NUGENT
Edited and with an Introduction by Thomas H. Wirth

literary round up continued

"Nugent is shown in this work to have made more culturally diverse contributions to art and literature than any other gay artist/writer of his time."

miliarity of ostracism, the pain of condemnation, and the obscurity about what the Bible really says about homosexuality make this book an important one in the continuing conversation regarding homosexuality and the Black church.

Not until his transition in 1987 did many people really know and appreciate the tremendous talents of Richard Bruce Nugent—writer, activist, actor, and artist. Incidentally, 1987 saw the transition of another of our brothers in the struggle: James Baldwin.

Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance: Selections from the Works of Richard Bruce Nugent, edited by Thomas H. Warth and published by Duke University Press, is a collection of stories, essays, drawings, and paintings that stand as fitting tribute to the enormity and immense versatility of Nugent's talent.

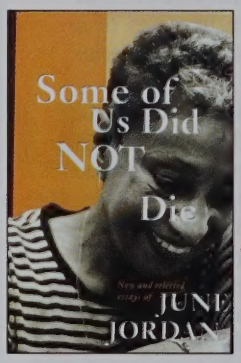
Dubbed a "true Renaissance Man" by E. Lynn Harris, Nugent is shown in this work to have made more culturally diverse contributions to art and literature than any other gay artist/writer of his time. Theories abound with posthumous outings of noted figures in the Harlem Renaissance. It seems that we gain some sense of empowerment when we realize that many writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance loved the way we do during an even more culturally suppressive society than today.

What Warth does in this brilliant testament to Nugent is highlight the artist's works that have the greatest cultural significance to the Black community and chronicle the most important epoch of Black artistic history. The work begins with a foreword by Henry [Skip] Louis Gates, Jr. (who some would say is a foremost authority on Black history) who says that it is "astonishing that so many prominent participants in the Harlem Renaissance were reportedly gay, lesbian, or bisexual." Maybe "astonishing" wasn't the right word. It certainly is "remarkable."

It could not have been an easy task deciding which of Nugent's works to include in this chronicle, but with scholastic aplomb and cultural sensitivity, Warth makes a good show. After a rather long (but incredibly erudite introduction), the reader is presented with one of Nugent's first published pieces, *Sahdje*, which appeared in Alain Locke's seminal anthology *The New Negro* (1925). For those of you who might not know, Locke is considered to have been the "dean" of the Harlem Renaissance—learned, artistic, and intrepid.

No tribute to Nugent would be complete without the inclusion of *Smoke, Lilies and Jade*—Nugent's homoerotic poem that was first published in *Fire!!* November 1926. If *Sahdje* established Nugent as a legitimate writer, *Smoke* (his most important piece) exalted him to the esteemed status of "gay writer of the Harlem Renaissance."

Gay Rebel also includes myriad drawings and artists renderings done by Nugent—often in conjunction with his writings. Now, that's talent—without the benefit of agents, Web designers, or publicists. *Gay Rebel* takes us back to a time when brothers and sisters wrote and produced art because they loved it. Thanks to this work, we get an intimate look into the life and art of our beloved wunderkind, who gives us hope that maybe one day we too may attain artistic beatification.



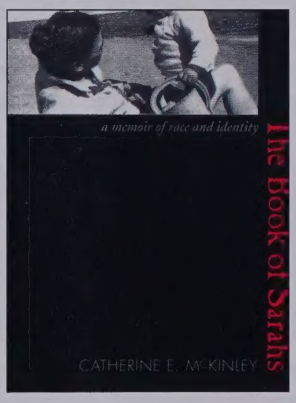
Another blessed spirit that has made its flight to join the ancestors was that of June Jordan who succumbed to breast cancer June 14 of this summer, but her voice still speaks as loudly and proudly as it ever did.

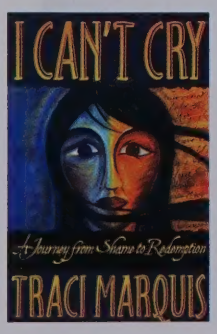
Some of Us Did Not Die: New and Selected Essays of June Jordan (Basic Civitas Books) is a collection of some of Jordan's most popular essays and begins with the Harlem riots in the 1960s and ends with her thoughts on the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It is clear from the topics covered that Professor Jordan was deeply concerned about the fate of African Americans and the society at large. She has been said to have "written her way to the forefront of political analysis, and moral summoning ... " and she wrote until her time on earth expired. I found her essay titled *Problems of Language in a Democratic State* especially pointed in that it confronts the cultural myths of segregation and desegregation

(particularly the latter) as linguistic anomalies that didn't cut through to the heart of incongruence or the accessibility of the alleged American dream.

The profundity of Jordan's works as evidenced by *Some* is only paralleled by her flare for the poetic. Hers was a voice that (like it or not) had to be heard. Although Jordan's body may not be here anymore, [she] "did not die." There can be no better legacy to leave a troubled (but hopeful) society than one that addresses the gravity of social and cultural conditions from a solution-based perspective. June Jordan had the privilege of doing what many have not: leaving her own epitaph as a reminder to celebrate humanness and diversity.

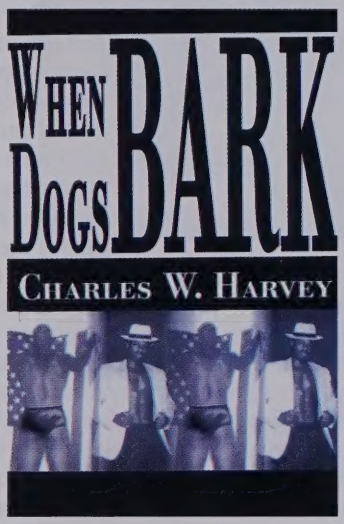
Although Jordan was able to monitor the political and racial pulse across decades of American "evolution," there is another author who tells her own story about the struggle for racial identity. *The Book of Sarahs: A Family in Parts* (Counterpoint) by Catherine McKinley is a memoir of a biracial child adopted by a white family in the 1960s who spends much of her young adult life in search of her birth mother—not exactly a unique story, but the telling of the story with all its intrigue, drama, frustrations, and triumphs is what makes this book worthy of reading. It reads like a "discovery" novel, but it isn't what one would generally read unless there is a genuine interest in the subject. The writing is quite good, but reads like an episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* where adoptees are always trying to find their birth parents. This type of story was quite popular in the late '80s and early '90s—when people from all walks of life set out on journeys to discover themselves. Apparently, this book is the result of a great deal of searching and finding on McKinley's part and identifying (as she puts it) "within someone else's paradigm." The good writing saves this book from being just another "I'm-looking-for-my-real-mother" story.





I Can't Cry: A Journey from Shame to Redemption (Sterling Publishers, LLC), a first novel by attorney-turned-novelist Traci Marquis, doesn't deliver what one might consider a riveting narrative of a personally significant story. The writing is formulaic and trite in some spots, but the book works as a way of delivering an empowering message about an African-American woman who finds redemption in the shame of having been sexually violated—a true survivor's tale.

And it is high time that a story like this was told; however, more attention to thematic structure, details, and the keen eye of a seasoned editor would have made this book a more interesting read. Ironically, the characters are stifled by the overemphasis on wordy descriptions and ungainly dialogue. All in all, *Cry* is an ample first attempt in telling an incredibly sensitive and socially relevant story.



There were two entries of poetry this season. Charles W. Harvey, obviously no stranger to the publishing world, has reissued *When Dogs Bark* (iUniverse)—a book of poetry and short stories. William Wordsworth once defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling ... ." These are the two words I would definitely use to describe Harvey's writing: spontaneous and powerful. His work is spontaneous, because he ambushes his readers; his writing seems to come from nowhere and then—Bam—right between the eyes. The power in his writing has to do with the seemingly unrefined emotions associated with his poetry and prose—emotions not too often dealt with outside of a therapist's office.

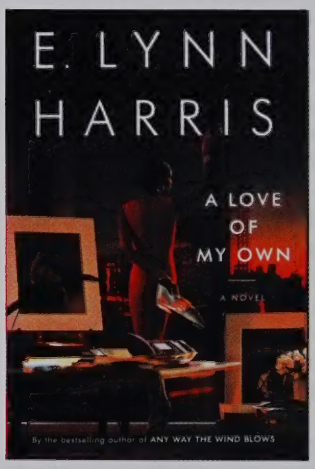
I am thinking about a particular story in this collection titled *It All Started with Underwear.* Initially, I assumed the story would be a benign, quasi-erotic story about a gay man's affinity for men's underwear. Well, it turns out that the story is indeed about a man with a fetish for other men's underwear, but the results are (let's just say) "criminal." I liked this story a great deal because it challenged my ivied literary conventions and it was well written.

Not for the faint at heart or the hypersensitive, Harvey's writing may well be a response to the "angry-black-gay-poets" movement that has been gaining momentum lately. Harvey tells a "bad" story "good" and uses his poetry as a way of delivering unrelenting blows against social institutions. Although a few of the poems are structurally flawed and "whiny," I enjoyed reading them for their merit as thought-provoking expres-

sions of spontaneous and powerful feelings. If Harvey's voice is akin to barking, his is one of the deepest and most ferocious I've heard in a long while.

Tales of a Woojiehead (Blackgurl Press), by Chicago native Gaylon B. Roberson, is the authors first published book of poetry. We applaud her efforts to pen the whisperings of her poetic muse. I was especially struck by the calypso-like rhythm of verses and Roberson's careful construction of poetic symmetry.

Included in this amalgam of poetry are short (very short) stories that are to the point and well written. Roberson's turn of phrase is both unique and refreshing and has a performance appeal. Augmenting the appeal of the books poetic merits are Roberson's use of various type fonts to convey mood and meaning. Ordinarily, this would be a publisher's no-no, but given the tenor of her poems and short stories, the device works wonderfully well and gives her work the type of uniqueness and variety very much missing from similar works already in print.



At last, we come to the book that has everyone talking: the eighth (count 'em 8th) installment in the E. Lynn Harris collection. A Love of My Own (Doubleday) continues with the saga of Raymond and his loves (or lack there of), a few new male and female characters and more fantastic escapades of Harris's larger-than-life characters. One in particular, Zola Denise Norwood, the editor of Bling Bling magazine appears to play opposite Raymond Tyler (a Harris perennial).

Not much (new) can be said for this novel other than the fact that Harris has decided to use more current events in his writing. Apparently, he was able to salvage the manuscript from the committee's pen in order to include the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

As usual, Harris's characters spin out of a grand imagination as he weaves more intrigue and secrecy into the sexuality and private lives of his characters. I found them even more contrived than usual and lacking in universal relatedness. Scene descriptions were linguistically unessential and verbose. But this is what sells novels, they tell me.

"As usual, Harris's characters spin out of a grand imagination as he weaves more intrigue and secrecy into their sexuality and private lives."

Whereas this "escapist" literature may be hugely entertaining and profitable, it is substantively deficient—the stuff soap operas are made of. Reading these types of books, as literature, is tantamount to reading the nutrition information on sugary snack packages for the recommended daily allowance of vitamins and minerals; you won't find any.

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In fact, Barna Research Online, a marketing research company based in Ventura, Calif., reported that a 2001 study showed that African Americans were more likely to read from the Bible than whites.

These statistics do not surprise Banks. He notes, on the other hand, that a great number of Blacks, especially Black men, are attracted to other religions, such as Islam. Demonstrating the African presence in the Bible, he said, would help Blacks feel a greater connection to Christianity.

"Christianity has been considered [by most Blacks] a white religion," said Banks, noting that earlier Bibles contained pictures depicting biblical characters, including Jesus Christ, as white. "That's why we're trying to draw out the Black presence [in the Bible]."

Charles Britt, a deacon at Carolina Missionary Baptist Church in Suitland, Md., was unaware that Black characters existed in the Bible until his pastor mentioned it during a Sunday morning church service. Britt now owns a copy of the *Original African Heritage Study Bible.*

James C. Winston Publishing Co. published the Original *African Heritage Study Bible*, which depicts biblical characters as black, in 1993.

Pictorial depictions of Black biblical characters also exist in the *Holy Bible for Children of Color*, a product Banks says he and one employee self-published in his home under the name Children of Color Publishing.

"It was actually for children [and] adults," Banks said. The Children of Color Storybook Bible followed. Thomas Nelson Publishers and World Publishers lent support to Children of Color Publishing.

Because of an interest to produce Bibles addressing Blacks in general, Banks changed the name of his company to Nia Publishing Co. in October 1998. The company also grew in the number of people employed by Banks. On staff today are four telemarketers, who contact bookstores and help independent distributors, an administrative person, a business consultant, and an editorial director.

Released in 2000, the *Women of Color Study Bible* was the first book introduced under the new name. It received excellent reviews from customers who bought the book through Amazon.com and then wrote reviews published on the site.

"We as African Americans haven't been taught about our place in biblical history," the reader said. "But because of the extensive research by [Nia], we now know." "When the *Women of Color Study Bible* came out people would say, 'you got the women's, now where's the men's'," Banks recalled.

Nia Publishing released *The Men of Color Study Bible* last February. While it does not contain images of Black biblical characters, in each of its study sections it does mention a Black presence. The Hammites, introduced in Genesis, are an example.

This fall, Nia publishing company will release five new books. T*he Wisdom and Grace Bible*, produced for young women of color, is one of these books.

To learn more about the products Nia Publishing Co. offers, readers can visit its Web site, www.niapublishing.com. Readers can place book orders there or by also contacting the company by phone at 770/969-8103.

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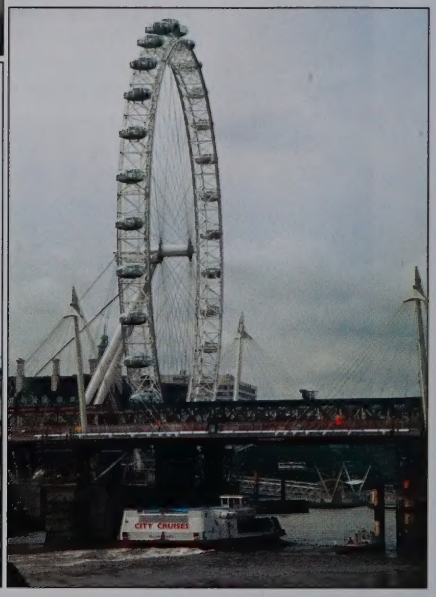
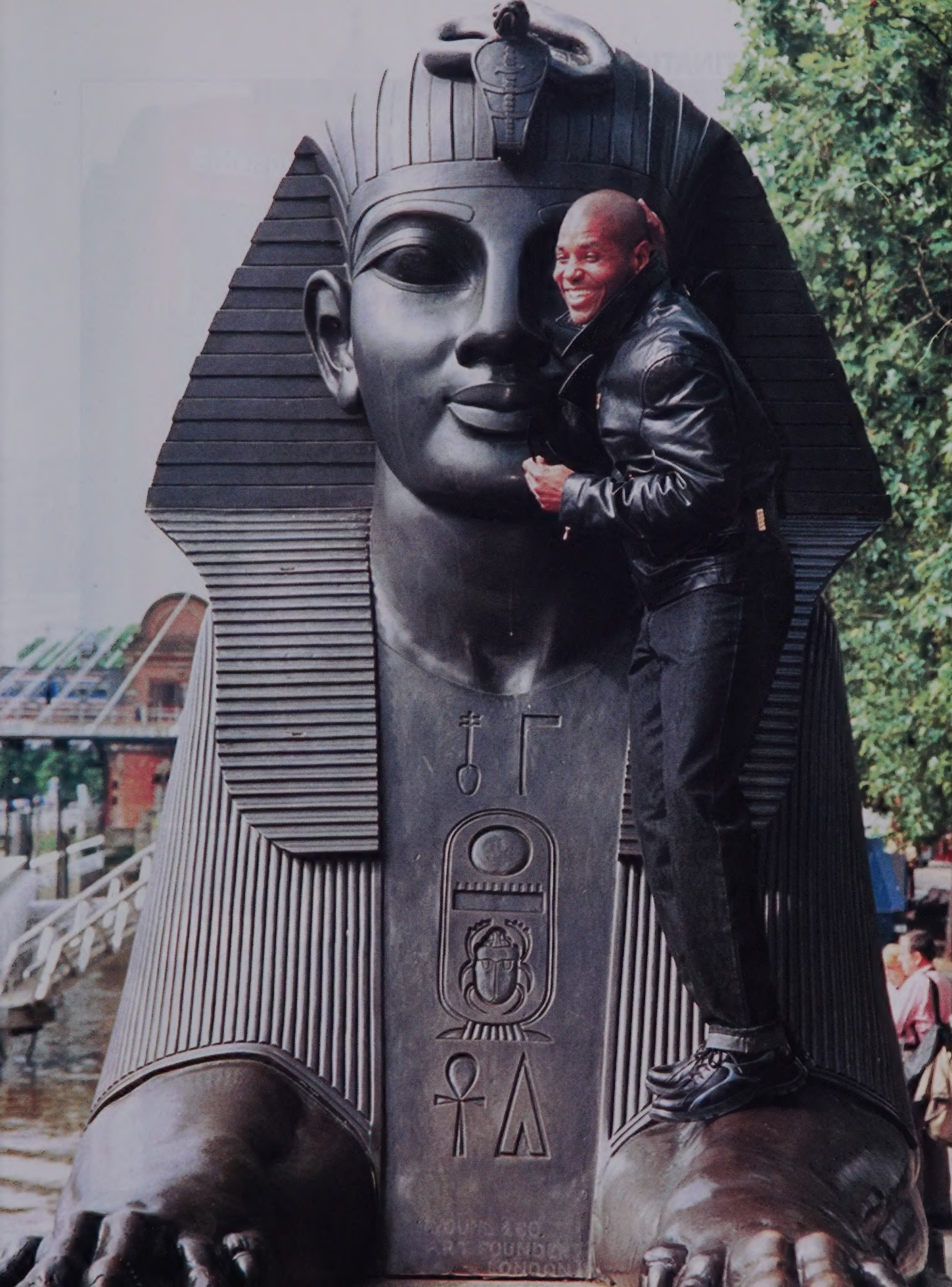
london
in a flash

words by Michael Andrea Adams
images by Darryl L. Matthew

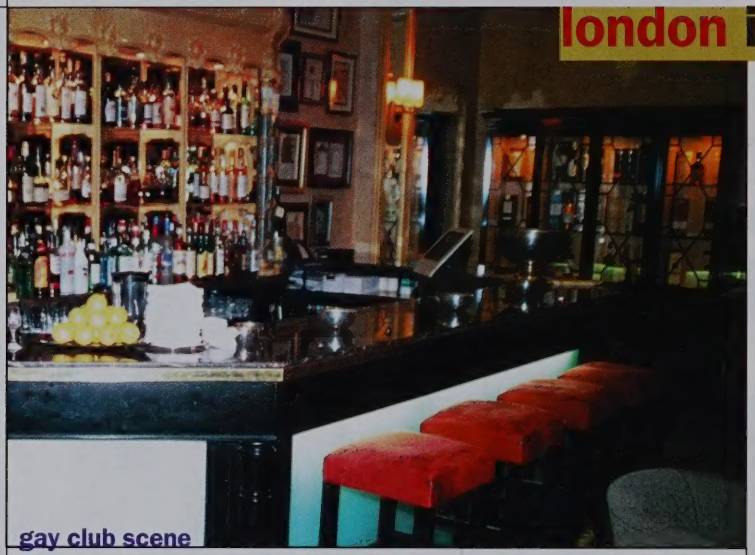
The recent launch of Brilliance of the Seas, the newest vessel in the Royal Caribbean fleet, brought forth a fury of travel industry professionals to the city of London for a two-day stint.

Home to more than 7 million, London, mother England's capitol, is enormous in size. After an 11-hour flight from Los Angeles, I was not up for sightseeing on the first day. And since a city this big can in no way be covered in a day, here it is just for you with the quickness.





london in a flash

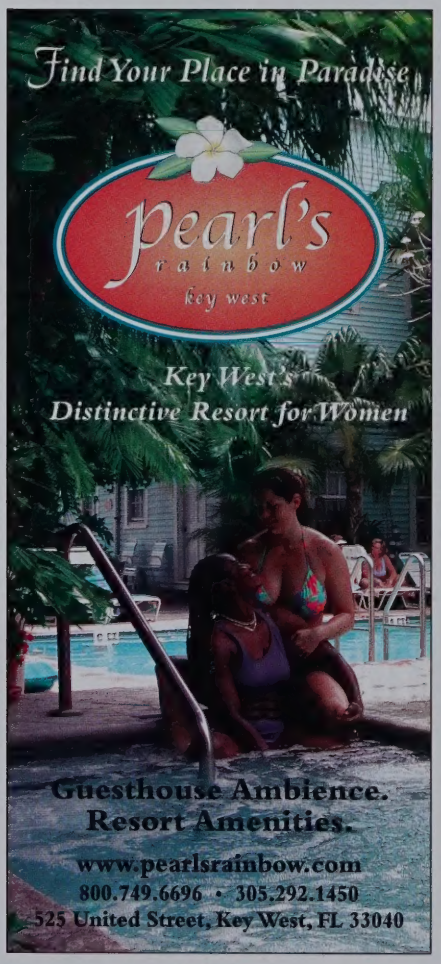


gay club scene

Heaven-*adjacent to Trafalgar Square in the heart of London's West End. www.heaven-london.com. In Brixton,* **The Fridge**-*the place to be on Friday or Saturday for "Love Muscle."* **Earl's Court**, *near Kensington Palace-considered to be an upscale gay area.* **Old Compton Street**-*a trendy community in Soho full of gay pubs and bars.*

lodging & entertainment

Hotels run the gamut from no-frills to the lap of phat luxury. It all depends on your budget.
For the most of London, deals and all, log onto www.visitbritain.com or call the British Tourism Authority in New York at 888/899-8391.



The Big Picture

The city is divided into five sections: West, East, North, South, and Central. Each region is made up of a multitude of communities with something for everyone. Travel on the legendary River Thames is considered as a voyage through the city's history. British Airways' state-of-the-art London Eye offers sweeping views of the entire city and beyond. Afterward, put on some comfortable shoes and get to steppin' for an up close and personal experience.

West London

The west side is home to such landmarks as Kensington Palace, the former home of Queen Victoria. England's largest castle, Windsor, is also situated in West London, as are The Royal Botanical Gardens and The Natural History Museum. To experience the abridged version of London's attractions, climb aboard one of the many "hop on/hop off" tour buses. For a flat and reasonable fee, you will get a view of not just West London, but nearly the entire city. Do not, however, pass go or leave West London without a visit to Chelsea and Knightsbridge, home of the world-renowned department store Harrods, whose Latin motto "Omnia, omnibus, ubique" (everything, for everyone, everywhere) perfectly defines the clientele on any given day.

A few blocks down from Harrods is where you'll find the more hip Harvey Nicks (Harvey Nichols if you're into formality), another high-end department store where an array of items reminiscent of traveling abroad can be yours. And while the British pound,

london in a flash

"British Airways' state-of-the-art London Eye offers sweeping views of the entire city and beyond. Afterward, put on some comfortable shoes and get to steppin' for an up close and personal experience."

getting there

British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, United, American and Air New Zealand offer nonstop flights from gateway cities to London's Heathrow Airport (LHR).

From LHR into the city: The cheapest way into London from the airport (a 40-60 minute journey) is the Tube's Picadilly line @ approximately $5.60 in U.S. Trains leave every 10 minutes. Or try the Airbus leaving every 30 minutes and stopping throughout London (www.gobycoach @ approx. $12.50 US one way.

symbolized by what looks like a small "f" trying to be a capital "L" written in cursive, is worth almost double the value of the U.S. dollar, many items are comparatively more reasonable there. Play it safe by following the rule of thumb when traveling abroad, which suggests that if you purchase what you can't get at home, you will in no way feel cheated.

Central London

Central London is home to the twins: splendor and grandeur. It is also the seat of England's government where you'll find Buckingham Palace, The Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, England's most important church and national shrine. The tranquil Hyde Park, where the royal guards pass in between the change in shifts, is also in the vicinity as is Trafalgar Square and the Nation's Galleries.

Probably the best known location in all of London is Piccadilly Circus, an intriguing mix of gentleman's clubs, touristy shops, and giant neon signs somewhat reminiscent of New York's Times Square.

Soho was once a community for British subjects to experience sex clubs and sleaze. Convent Garden was the rundown haunt of vegetable and flower traders. Pretty SoHo Square is now a bustling community where the employees of the film, advertising, and design companies of nearby Dean and Wardour Streets come for a sandwich during lunch. The bosses, however, can most likely be found in the restaurants of Greek Street, just south of the square. Old Compton Street is another haven for Epicureans alike. And for the freshest fruits and vegetables, head for the Berwick Street market. Soho is also home to the multilevel jazz club Ronnie Scott's, a must-do for American tourists.

Visit Convent Garden's covered mall and the abundance of very chic and unique boutiques and outdoor cafes. The Royal Opera House is also in the neighborhood. And since you're so close, be sure and stop by Chinatown for Chinese food in London. Marked by beautiful and ornate gates on the street and ducks in the windows of almost every restaurant, you wont miss it. There are a ton of places open 'til the wee hours of the morning in this part of town. Just be careful because it's fast!

Last of all, you must do tea. Afternoon tea, that is. Because you're a tourist, hell, do it in style at The Savoy Hotel. You'll experience near royalty and above arriving in their Rolls Royce as the piano man plays while you indulge in a tower of finger sandwiches, scones, and a side of tea with milk, or cream if you prefer. Enjoy!

royal treatment

The launch of **Brilliance of the Seas**, *the newest vessel in the Royal Caribbean fleet, brought a fury of travel industry professionals to the city of London for a two-day stint. Our travel editor, Michael A. Adams, was one of them.*

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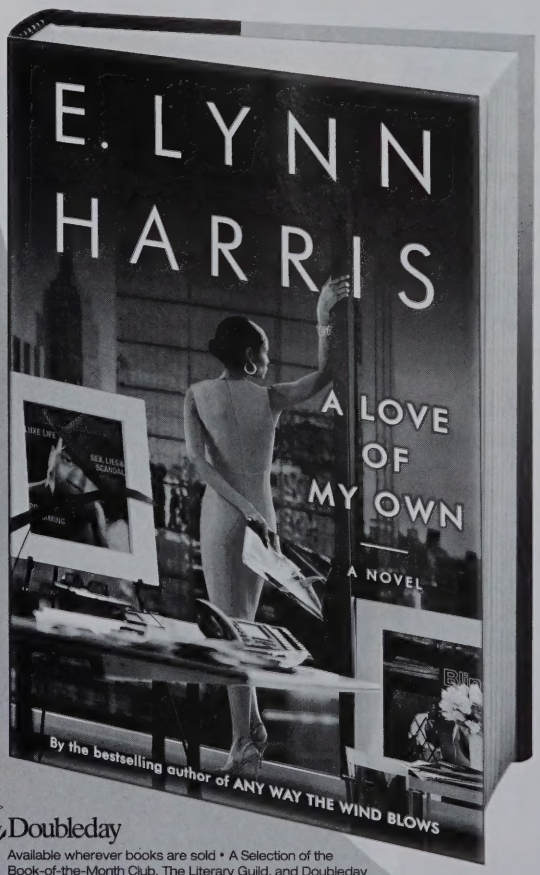

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PIECE OF MIND

Struck Again

words by Donna Payne

I am writing in response to the "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" article by Dorinda Henry. The Human Rights Campaign has struck again. They have struck a cord in the African-American community with Atlanta Gospel & Soul because the work needs to be done. Currently, we have African-American clergy in Miami, joining the Religious Right to fight against us. A flyer with Dr. King's picture on it, telling African Americans that Dr. King would be outraged if he knew homosexuals wanted "special rights." This was passed out to 300 Black churches. In the state of Washington, we have African-American clergy also teaming up with the Religious Right to keep us from having relationship and family protections. Around the country, a lot of African-American clergy are not willing to discuss sexuality, let alone sexual orientation. At which point will you choose to enter and begin the work that needs to be done?

HRC has already started the work by having Gospel & Soul. Connections in the local Atlanta community were made a year in advance. Churches were asked to attend by members that either came out of the closet by asking their choir and pastor to participate in the event *or* they were already out and felt their church should participate. One church was asked to participate by a straight ally that wanted to help. The process, calling, meeting, and writing letters to churches takes five months of local organizing work.

It is always easy to look at HRC's Gospel & Soul event from the outside with highly critical glasses. Atlanta Gospel and Soul was very successful with 450 people attending. That speaks for itself. Instead of using energy to attack HRC, I would suggest you change your "critical glasses" and put on some "work glasses." We need every same-gender-loving person writing letters to their pastors in their home state to let them know we are present, we are loved by God, and we deserve equal rights. Fight for your God given rights, don't fight us!

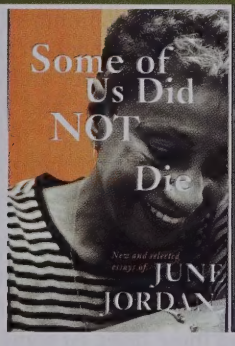
Donna Payne is Constituent Field Organizer for the Human Rights Campaign. She resides in Washington, D.C.

Remembering june jordan

words by Shirlette Ammons

1936 - 2002

"Any abridgement of anybody's right to exist places in jeopardy each one of us, regardless of race, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, or gender."



The Life of A Politically Incorrect Poet

June Jordan, prolific essayist, novelist, journalist, educator, and "Universal Poet," died on June 14, 2002, after a valiant bout with cancer. Twenty-six books and publications in countless anthologies, literary journals, and magazines honor her career as the most published African-American writer in history. Recognizing her work is a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Conference of Black Writers, a Rockefeller Foundation Grant, the Prix de Rome in Environmental Design, accolades from the United Nations and Library of Congress, readings sponsored by the Academy of Poets, and teaching posts at City College of New York and Sarah Lawerence College. Since her first book, *Who Look at Me*, a poem dedicated to African-Americans published in 1969, Jordan has endlessly loved and fought on our behalf.

Born in Harlem, raised in the Bed-Stuy section of Brooklyn, Jordan's conversations with "Minister Malcolm" at his Temple No. 7 Headquarters in Harlem molded the platform for radical change in the struggle for Black liberation during the Black Power/Black Arts Movements. Her participation in the Feminism and the Black Writer seminar at the National Black Writer's Conference in 1978 insurrected the taboo between Black women, lesbianism, feminism, and what (if anything) a woman's sexual orientation has to do with her literary merit. Always one accurate step ahead of the changing times, Jordan's work began on the frontlines of the Black struggle and ended powerfully on the page, each breath confronted and confronting. She spent the final leg of her career as Professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley.

Author Shirlette Ammons recalls her interactions with the Poet/Warrior, June Jordan

When I sat down with Jordan in her UC Berkeley office in fall 2000, I asked her straight up, "Why ain't you crazy?" Her immediate, logical reply, "I don't have time to be."

On the train, like where I'm from, nothing is more than a blur. Modesco, Wasco, Merced, trivial black dots on the California map, whiz by so absolutely. I think about my aunts back in Mount Olive, N.C., and the contrived cold that marks their daily routine. I recall them adorning layers of cotton, fleece, and flannel to weather the refrigeration department at Carolina Turkeys. This nostalgic trip jabs my senses as I journey home in my thoughts on an early morning Amtrak that is at least 3,000 miles from my aunts and the turkey plant's frigid stench.

Poets commit the burden and beauty of each memory to their senses. This is why it matters to take a five-hour train ride from Bakersfield to Berkeley, Calif. to touch June Jordan's prolific right hand, the hand that penned jazz poetry so shrill it sings like a trumpet resounding from some higher place. Her delicate voice articulates poetry and political activism as if they are water from the same overflowing river. Jordan is, as she has been called, the "universal poet." Her writings take the scenic route home so that we can absorb everything she has already seen. Why does this poet/woman work so diligently to conjure a more sensible memory? When did she notice the air changing like the fraudulent winter behind the turkey plant's stony doors?

I am waiting for Jordan in her sixth floor office on UC Berkeley's campus. A picture of an Asian-American woman, tank-topped, buzz-cut, occupies the wall in front of me. Where are you? Torso precise at the corner of the wall. Eye casting me into a mystery. Hand of the hungry (from Jordan's *Living Room: New Poems* by June Jordan). She, holding a pro-action sign powerfully high, sends a rush of energy through my body. I wonder if poets realize they are holding up a sign. Is that enough? To write a poem about change and let it sit on a page hoping someone eventually reads it, "gets it" then purges forth with elevated voice and signs and fists? As Jordan raps up a conversation with a young man who stopped by, I realize I am here, recalling passages from Jordan's *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood*: Ace! Look me in my eye! So I lifted my head to look him in the eye. What are you afraid of? And I answered him, Nothing, Sir. ... And at that moment I felt like I was making myself a promise: A big one, reciting lines from *Manifesto of the Rubber Glove*: I am wearing brand new loud blue rubber gloves because I don't wanna die from mainstream contamination/ mainstream poison water poisonous like ... and living the quote: A woman's body is the universal shelter (from *Living Room*). I am wondering about her fiery spirit, comprehending how strikingly massive word power really is. June Jordan's language pierces me to the bone and I shiver at the load her soul carries. Any abridgement of anybody's right to exist places in jeopardy each one of us, regardless of race, class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, proportional size (from Jordan's, *Affirmative Acts: Political Essays*). We are up at the world's sleeping hour because we don't want to bare this stinking weight alone.

Liberation theology. How race is lived in America. Can you catch up?

Sitting outside room 2032 in the Valley Life Science Building on UC Berkeley's campus won't make me a poet anymore than swallowin' a frog will teach me to holler for rain. But I am small and hungry, excited to see her approaching.

Shufflin feet that sound like sandpaper music. Cropped hair, the color of watered-down black cherry Kool-Aid. An alternatively business-type manner, like catch up with me cause I'm on the move. Voice runnin like liquid lava toward one of those indigenous places in her poems, molten and lyrical, destroying the contaminated village, daring it to build again.

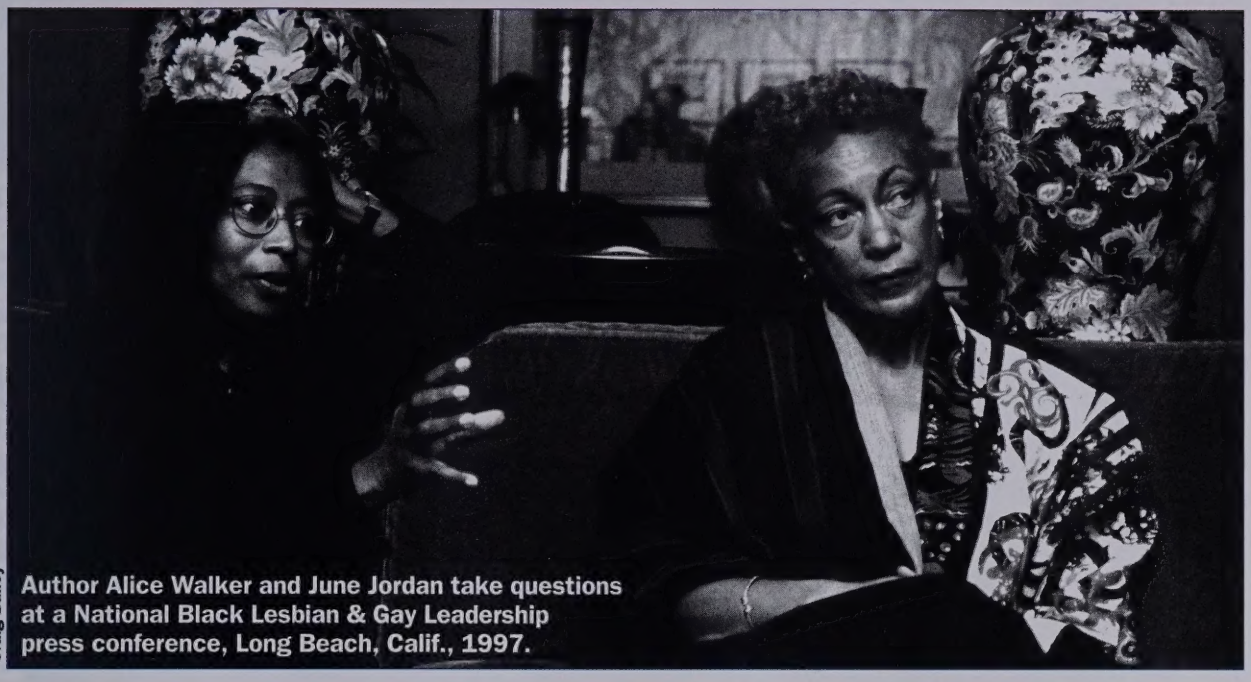
Before I am welcomed into the class, Jordan asks her students if they would mind me sitting in on their discussion. She treats the learning environment as a community of equal voices deciding democratically to welcome visitors. And I trust what I can see and what I can hear and what I can do on my block, and around the corner, and on the campus where I teach (from Affirmative Acts). I wait some more before a round woman with a vibrant smile cracks the door and motions me in.

Jordan's 12 o'clock poetry class is reading persona poems. They are relinquishing their own identities to write the poem of someone they will never be beyond the life that emerges from these lines. At some point you just have to trust/somebody else the soldier/wearing a white shirt the poet/wearing glasses the woman/wearing red shoes/into combat (from Living Room).

The class consists of about 20 students who personify the globe's diversity. One olive-toned young lady talks about Hinduism and her grandfather's singing of the Gita, which she recalls in recitation. Jordan becomes a student, listening, asking an occasional question, yielding the floor to this poet/teacher sharing her ancestry.

Hinduism. Service and sacrifice. Like a tortoise withdraws his limbs, so does the God-realized withdraw his senses. Stratified society. Chocolate cotton. Guatemala. Chocolate persona poem. Homeless man, the world's recyclist You bring out the sista in me. No adverbs. Poetry as an understanding of the world. Poems on dharma and karma due Tuesday. Comments and constructive criticism. Pass the poem back to its original owner.

By the end of class, I am understanding cultural pluralism, a term I came across in *Affirmative Acts*, a collection of political essays by Jordan. A democratic philosophy of cultural pluralism is what I just witnessed in her poetry class: A society in which numerous distinct ethnic and racial and religious groups rightfully and



Craig Bailey

Author Alice Walker and June Jordan take questions at a National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership press conference, Long Beach, Calif., 1997.

equally *co*-exist within one nation. The belief that no simple explanatory system or view of reality can account for all the phenomena of life (from *Affirmative Acts*).

She takes a seat an arm's length away from my nervous heartbeat. She asks me, "So, what do you want to know?" just like that. After thanking her for the work she does, I say, "I just want to know about your process, your theory of teaching and writing poetry, and how it all comes together."

The passion of her plight is as obvious as the light in her eyes. She describes the Poetry for the People program as a village of what I call Truth Poets, those folks who make sure change keeps changing—for the better. I was looking at the students: Asian- and African- and Hispanic- and Native American ... As I listened to their modest demands for safety and representation, I felt almost calm: They were working it out. They had to (from *Affirmative Acts*). I interpreted the objective of the class to introduce, cultivate, and nurture a creative resistance to an indelible capitalist machine. Poetry is the propelling avenue.

The class views itself and the world as a collective. As with their persona poems, they step into a situation before they consider changing it. They will ultimately take their knowledge of writing and applying poetry into the Berkeley Public School System, accepting responsibility for the co-existence of justice and creative expression within academic walls. Because she is teaching us to write while standing, the history of our now will read like a poem in which each word, each member, is significant.

It is no longer that white America asks what is to be done "to integrate" Black people into "mainstream" society but that white America has expanded its racist perspectives to discredit or preclude all non-European immigration, all social programs indispensable to anybody not born middle-class, and all non-European languages, histories, literatures (from *Affirmative Acts*).
Change is not absolute. Poetry for the People. Too many young people don't know their history. CHANGE IS NOT ABSOLUTE. Grabs my hand. Wish you the best. Always.

There is always a child "born with a veil over her face," my grandma would say. She grows up thinking too much, wanting more than a somehow-someway gospel hymn that never found its way out of the sanctuary of a disquieting solitude. Someone will recognize her as strange. Someone else knows she will do great things.

One day she will ask a question no one can answer, The Nazis? Does snow make feet bleed, Momma (from *Soldier*)? She will be talkin' crazy. She will easily learn the language of the white folks. She will add her own thang. She will watch the world carefully and wish to stir it up with her words.

She will learn that poverty and oppression are putrid smells. She will realize that poor folks get used to the stench. They start to believe the whole world smells sour. They become complacent with pollution. They welcome it like a visitor who ain't goin' nowhere.

And then she will emerge from this stinking place, educated and grown, her memory full of that foul smell. She will go home and around the globe and realize that she has never been alone. Her lungs will become full of rank truths. She will be politically incorrect because her voice will rumble incensed poems. Standing in the middle of everywhere reeking of home, she will knowingly proclaim:

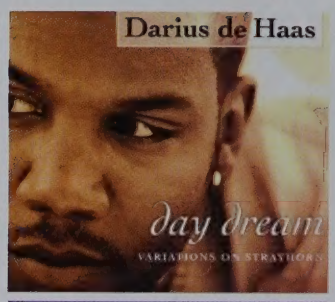
I want to be a poet. Or at least love like one. I want to join the universal struggle and make my wordteeth strong. I want to process the world and change it slowly. I want to kill this smell. I am going to kill this smell.

Rest easy, Warrior Woman.
You have earned your restin' place.

billy strayhorn

1915 - 1967

words by Michael K. Watts



"He was an unsung hero, a great figure in history who created a great treasure of music."

Composer, arranger, and pianist Billy Strayhorn was born on Nov. 29, 1915. The child prodigy was raised in the Homewood district of Pittsburgh where he worked odd jobs to buy a used upright piano while in grade school. Upon his matriculation at Westinghouse High School, Strayhorn began composing pieces and was first pianist for the Senior Orchestra. He even played Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto opus 16 at his high school graduation.

From there, Strayhorn enrolled in the Pittsburgh Musical Institute and began playing at local bars with a combo called the Mad Hatters. At age 19 he composed the music for a comedy musical, *Fantastic Rhythm*. It was during this time that he wrote a song entitled "Life is Lonely" which would become his most noted recording, renamed as "Lush Life." A visit backstage at Pittsburgh's Stanley Theatre where Duke Ellington was about to play his first show would prove to be a turning point in Strayhorn's career. The 23-year-old met Ellington and sang a song he had recently written entitled "Something to Live For." The rest is history.

Strayhorn moved to New York and went on to become Ellington's primary collaborator and arranger, penning songs like "Take the 'A' Train," "Lotus Blossom," "Chelsea Bridge" and "A Flower is a Lovesome Thing." These two musicians shared a unique chemistry, which allowed them to make countless recordings over the next 30 years. But the success Strayhorn achieved with Ellington had its drawbacks.

Working with Ellington forced him to remain in the shadows of the legendary jazz musician. Many of the compositions Strayhorn wrote for Ellington were credited as Strayhorn-Ellington compositions, and some were even credited as Ellington's alone.

Living an openly gay lifestyle did not make Strayhorn's life any easier. Nevertheless, the enigmatic composer lived his life somewhat like a quiet soldier. In a time when people were afraid to be who they truly were, Strayhorn was self-accepting and loved men without shame.

In the 1950s, Strayhorn completed solo albums, revues, and a host of collaborations. Strayhorn worked with the likes of Lena Horne, Pearl Bailey, Johnny Hodges, and Quincy Jones. In 1964, he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, a result of years of smoking and drinking. Strayhorn's last composition, *Blood Count*, was completed while in the hospital. He died in 1967. Later that year, Ellington recorded an album of Strayhorn's material entitled And His Mother Called Him Bill.

Today, Strayhorn's legacy lives on in the music of Ellington and in a host of tribute albums. The most recent such project is *Day Dream: Variations on Strayhorn* (PS Classics) by accomplished Broadway singer-actor Darius de Haas. "I want [Strayhorn] to be remembered as an extraordinary composer in his own right," de Haas said, "He was an unsung hero, a great figure in history who created a great treasure of music."

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